MY·CRANFORD

BY

ARTHUR·GILMAN

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My Cranford

Like far-off bugles softly, sweetly blowing
Across blue lakes, where answering echoes play,
A strange low song, in waves of music flowing,
Sings in my heart, and calls me far away.
I hear it when the wheels of traffic turning
Fill all the world with discord, fret, and jar;
I hear it when the midnight lamp is burning,
And when in beauty comes the morning star;
Awake, asleep, that voice doth ever find me,
Its admonition speaking night and day,
Strangely mysterious, coming to remind me
That I am wanted, waited far away;
Across the world, far over land and sea,
The happy hills of home are calling me.

JULIAN STEARNS CUTLER.

THE MAIN STREET OF CRANFORD

My Cranford

A Phase of the Quiet Life

By

Arthur Gilman

I would have peace and quietness.
Shakespeare.

Some minds by nature are averse to noise,
And hate the tumult half the world enjoys.
Cowper, Retirement.

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In June 't is good to lie beneath a tree
While the blithe season comforts every sense,
Steeps all the brain in rest and heals the heart,
Brimming it o'er with sweetness unawares.

LOWELL.

O friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue and to peace,
Domestic life in rural leisure passed!
Few know thy value and few taste thy sweets;
Though many boast thy favors and affect
To understand and choose thee for their own.

COWPER, *The Garden.*

A WORD TO THE READER

A QUIET neighborhood, like My Cranford, has its formal and uneventful annals in the records of town meetings. Its intimate doings make no mark on the pages of history. Perhaps it is well, but there are some phases of unostentatious life in a small hamlet that are worth more than a passing glance.

The parish that gives excuse for the pages that follow is dear to hundreds of its scattered children. Like many another New England hamlet that can hardly claim the modest dignity of a village, My Cranford has sent its sons and daughters far and wide over the world, and they have given a good

account of themselves. Ever and anon they return for temporary shelter under the ancient rooftrees; from time to time they seek in their last days the comforting calm that the great world did not give them when they were living the strenuous life, — a life that they once hoped would win for them peace, perhaps luxury. Their deeds have been worthy of record, as worthy as those of the generations that went before them, which were thought fit to be emblazoned on the pages of history; but it is not the present purpose to perform this pious duty.

I shall merely suggest remotely the wealth of incident that the chronicler might preserve were he to sit at the feet of our local antiquary for a while,

were he to essay to put life into the bare records of the town clerk and depict the stirring deeds of pioneers in the hamlet, or the every-day activity in such a parish. It is of great territorial extent, and the houses are as "far asunder" as those visited so faithfully by Chaucer's good man of religion. The monotony of life, too, is sufficient to incite men and women to emulate the historic example of those pilgrims who sought a larger experience in the little journey to the shrine of the blissful martyr of Canterbury.

More and more as the strife grows intenser, in modern affairs, it is made plain that there is a place in the economy of the world for unperturbed regions like My Cranford, where the

weary dweller in the great city, and the overwrought toiler in the rattling, bustling manufactory, may withdraw themselves and refresh their minds by meditation under green trees, resting their bodies the while on the verdant grass.

What saith the Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table? "I think I could go to pieces, after my life's work were done, in one of those tranquil places as sweetly as in any cradle that an old man may be rocked to sleep in. I visit such spots always with infinite delight. My friend the Poet says that rapidly growing towns are most unfavorable to the imaginative and reflective faculties. Let a man live in one of these old quiet places, he says, and the wine

of his soul, which is kept thick and turbid by the rattle of busy streets, settles, and, as you hold it up, you may see the sun through it by day and the stars by night."

Is My Cranford a place for this sort of re-creation? Perchance these pages may help to answer the question.

By the Fireside,
Wintertide, 1908.

*** There is but a single name mentioned in these chapters that would be recognized by the Postmaster at Cranford, and that is a name in fiction.

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From photographs by Addie Eastman and C. M. Fletcher.

I

Before the Winter Fire

The wind is roistering out of doors,
My windows shake and my chimney roars;
My Elmwood chimneys seem crooning to me,
As of old, in their moody, minor key,
And out of the past the hoarse wind blows,
As I sit in my arm-chair and toast my toes.

LOWELL.

I am not one who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk
Of friends, who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbours, daily, weekly, in my sight.

. . . . . .

Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire;
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage-fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

WORDSWORTH.

MY CRANFORD

I

Before the Winter Fire

LET the wind roar!

I sit comfortable before my winter fire in my winter home and look from the window upon the icy streets with a content that is not disturbed even when the treacherous sidewalk trips up my venturesome city friends and lands them on their backs in dismay!

My thoughts are not upon ice, nor snow, nor windy streets. I am warmed inwardly by memories of summer in general, and of particular summers in

My Cranford. The shady lanes, the silvery lakes, the hammocks and chairs under the maples, the quiet and peace of the paths through the woods and of the serpentine roads and expanded views spread out at our feet without the labor of mountain-climbing, the leisurely haymakers in fields every one of which is moulded by nature on Hogarth's line of beauty; all these crowd my mind and warm the cockles of my heart. It is June again.

A soft haze veils the sun, the bees with drowsy hum
Flit to the roses drooping in the heat,
The rippling waters play, the scent of new-mown hay
Floats in the breeze that wanders warm and sweet:

The hush of summer noon is over all,
A sudden burst of song — the wild birds' loving call!

"The axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the centre of each and every town," saith the Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table, and it is distinctly visible in My Cranford.

Long ago, when railways began to disturb the peace of the world, our conservative fathers decided that their quiet should not be broken by bells and whistles, that no factory should contaminate the pure air by its smoke, and that no "business" should bring bustle and throngs into its streets. We may go over Alston Moor to Shrewsbury and find this; but that involves a drive of seven miles, and we make it a journey

for all of a summer day. We put our horses and carriages up at some hospitable stable, and if we ever become ambitious to own those snorting means of locomotion, we shall find a garage for our automobiles for the day.

That generation apparently held, with Billy Balmer, Christopher North's old boatman, that a railway was "a species of infernal machine for the purpose of promoting sudden death," and they certainly agreed with Wordsworth when he asked, protesting against the projected "Kendall and Windermere railway,"

Is, then, no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault?

Can it be true, as Froude wrote, "In

every department of life we thank God that we are not like our fathers"?

We have two "stores," Wanamaker's and Macy's, where one may gossip and buy tobacco and lard and rakes and hoes; and there is a post office in the corner of one of them, in which twice every day sundry men and boys, girls and women, intrude to see if by chance a letter may not have drifted their way; but for most of the bright days and the rainy days the streets before them are as quiet as the village graveyard that lies beside the big white meeting-house opposite Macy's.

In these two headquarters of gossip there are solemn and humorous debates, ranging from the state of the nation to the minute affairs of Cranford. Around

a warm stove in winter and around a cold one in summer, under a placard that warns all men to avoid smoking the cigars that are there sold, the veterans of the Civil War fight their battles anew, and wide-traveled local heroes retell for the hundredth time familiar legends of the storied charms of nature and humanity in remote regions that, we are astonished to know, they have visited. The storekeeper himself ignores the warning against the use of the slow-burning weed, and the air is thick with its fumes. Again, if it be harvesting time, these resorts are empty. To-day, as my mind reviews summer experience, I figure but three boys and four men, and the place would appear as quiet as an asylum for the deaf and dumb, did I not hear one

of the men say as he received his letter, "Pretty warm this morning!"

We have but one building for church services, and the pastor is really "the person[1] of the town," as Chaucer would say, so that Cranford is not disturbed, even as others, by the contentions of rival denominations, and this fact is the keystone of our united community life, on which I have more to say anon.

The hamlet is honeycombed with "societies," each of which has its social or benevolent sphere of activity, and lively they all are, as one would understand if he could read their proceedings, or even see a list of their titles. There is the G. A. R. and the D. A. R., the

[1] If clerk may be pronounced clark, may not person be parson?

Y. M. C. L. and the Y. P. S. C. E., the Grange, the Woman's Club, the Philanthropic Society (specifically, as though the others were not all of them "philanthropic"), the Cent Institution, the King's Daughters, the Ladies' Reading and Charitable Society, the Junior Y. M. C. L., the W. C. T. U., the Woman's Board, and doubtless many more the names of which no man has ever heard uttered. These all have their meetings and their picnics, and they discuss the subjects that their names suggest as appropriate, as well as many that do not appear on the surface, such as literary current history, the books in the library, and, for all that a mere outsider may know, hats and cloaks and Butterick fashions.

It has been said that there is less neighborliness and more philanthropy in the world now than there was a hundred years ago, but it seems to me that we in Cranford are sufficiently taken up with the doings of our neighbors, despite the long list showing the very general character of our good will. Does not Carlyle tell us that the study of our fellow men is the most interesting and fruitful of all, and Pope, did he not say that the proper study of mankind is man, and shall we of Cranford hesitate to follow such comforting counsel? Are not these societies "neighborly"? We devoutly study our neighbors in love. The case might be otherwise, if we had a number of different churches separating us into many cliques; but as there is

only one, we all belong to all of these lively bodies.

In the "good old days" of long ago, which some of us recall, there were husking-bees here and quiltings, barn-raisings and house-warmings, while now we have church suppers and fairs, meetings of lodges and granges, picnics, and campings-out, country weeks, and old home weeks, even excursions to the Pacific coast or to the continent; the teacher no longer "boards around," as he or she used to, and the Cranford *Times*, for we have a little paper, weekly beats with its kindly light upon cottage and mansion alike. There may be less privacy in some towns that might be mentioned, but in My Cranford we may be as private as we like.

The gentle editor of our minute paper sheds not his journalistic light too freely upon our privacy. We may retire from it if we wish, and most of us do care to.

In the days of yore we had to carry our grain to the mill to get our flour, but not so to-day. Wanamaker brings the product of Minnesota to our doors, and he brings also the beef of Chicago, the pickles of Providence, and the cereal foods from Niagara and Battle Creek. We have no longer to put our beans into our big ovens of a Saturday night to avoid Sunday labor, as our fathers did, not so very long ago. Pittsburg sends them to our hands ready baked. We do not have to sit at the loom day by day to weave our homespun for clothing; better cloth is sent

to us from the factories all around us, and at a smaller cost. We do not make our own shoes, as of yore, though benign old neighbor Dawes still stands ready to make them for us in his little shop with its weather-beaten sign; for Lynn and Brockton can make a dozen pairs while he is getting his tools ready to begin. We of Cranford have a weakness for the product of the little shop, I confess, though we give it only that custom which is forced upon us by the exigencies of time and space. It makes no difference to Mr. Dawes; he spends just as many hours in the little rooms, and looks just as busy and, I must add, just as happy, in spite of his fourscore and how many years, I can't say nor guess.

Our philanthropic societies are not so modern as some may perhaps be tempted to think. They do not all run back so far as a hundred years, but one of them dates from 1801. It is that one specially named in its charter, granted by the legislature, "*The* Philanthropic Society." What might its purpose be? It could only live in a place with but one church, for its object is to devise "some plan for the perpetual support of the gospel in the town." The legislature would have debated long in more modern times before granting such a charter.

Whether the Philanthropic Society ever actually supported the gospel in My Cranford I am not curious to inquire. It stands as a lasting testimony to the good intentions of the fathers,

and certainly the gospel has been supported, and we have had a long line of devoted ministers, —

Ministers
Detached from pleasure, to the love of gain
Superior, insusceptible of pride,
And by ambitious longings undisturbed;
Men whose delight is where their duty leads
Or fixes them; whose least distinguished day
Shines with some portion of that heavenly lustre
Which makes the Sabbath lovely in the sight
Of blessed angels, pitying human cares.

II

The Established Church

You may smile at the nasals of old Deacon Brown,
Who followed by scent till he ran the tune down, —
And dear Sister Green, with more goodness than grace,
Rose and fell on the tunes as she stood in her place,
And where "Coronation" exultantly flows,
Tried to reach the high notes on the tips of her toes!
To the land of the leal they have gone with their song,
Where the choir and the chorus together belong.
O, be lifted ye gates! Let them hear them again, —
Blessed song, blessed Sabbath, forever, Amen!

B. F. Taylor.

II

The Established Church

IN the good old days when Independency or Congregationalism was the established church, there could, of course, be but one variety of religious worship in our town, and the people, who all paid for its support in their tax-bills, were under the legal sway of a single religious authority, whether they liked it or not, — and a rigid sway it was. How rigid it was is plainly shown by the action of the town in 1785, when one Spalding petitioned to have his estate exempt from the ministerial tax on the ground that he "belonged to the

Baptist denomination." Popular feeling was expressed clearly and emphatically when it was "*Voted*, that the estate of Edward Spalding shall not be freed from minister's tax for the time past, present, or to come." And yet the town of Cranford assesses no "minister's tax" on Edward's descendants nowadays.

In those early days we built our first meeting-house in My Cranford. It was not of stone, like the houses of worship that we had left in the mother country. We had stone enough, to be sure, but there was also wood, and we found it convenient as well as temporarily prudent to use the more perishable material. We all went to meeting as well as paid for preaching in those days. It was a matter of principle, we liked to say. In

time, too, we put up a second wooden building, and still later that needed to be changed for something better adapted to our wants or tastes.

It was in 1804 that we built our third meeting-house. We made special doorways to the gallery of the women on the east, and to that of the men on the west. We erected seats for the four deacons and a communion-table on hinges below the high pulpit, and we arranged a series of free seats for the aged and the deaf, making sure that the men should have separate ones from the women, young or old.

Every one was seated as he ought to be in those times, or at least as it was commonly supposed that he ought to be, in accord with the rigid established

rules of social precedence. It was not only the deacons and the deaf, the girls and the boys, the fathers and the mothers, who were told where they might sit. Social distinctions were intricate, and they had to be carefully considered by a committee specially charged with that duty. It was known as the committee to seat the meeting-house. Every one of us was expected to "appear before the Lord," certainly, but we were not allowed to appear in any but the most discriminating and orderly fashion.

Each pew (there were ninety-five of them, six feet long and five feet wide) had a painted and paneled door hung on hinges, so that the inmates could shut themselves up, if they wished, and be free from all intrusion. (It was not in

Cranford, however, that when a stranger comfortably ensconced himself in the pew of a dignified dowager, she approached the door and emphatically said to him, "I occupew this pie!") Finally we topped each partition with an ornamental balustrade. Inside there were hard, uncushioned seats on hinges; for, like the Pharisee in the parable, we stood when we prayed, or rather when the minister prayed, and it was more convenient to turn up the seats as we rose. When the minister said "Amen," we all dropped our seats back, and there was a slamming throughout the building that has been likened by warlike folk to "a musketry salute of a raw, poorly drilled militia company." The younger we happened to be at the time, the more of

a slam our own particular seat was sure to make at the psychological moment.

We had few conveniences in meeting-house or home, but there were two not known in churches at this day of invention. Some of our pews were furnished with flag-bottomed armchairs for the grandparents, and for the rest of us there usually were long, narrow "leaning boards," as they were called, intended to be placed conveniently lengthwise of the pews, in front of the occupants as they sat, upon which they might rest their weary heads, when they were too drowsy to pay good attention to the preaching that they professed to be exceedingly desirous to enjoy.

The meeting-house was in the middle of things, and it still is. It houses the

Public Library and the Grange, as well as the Church, and thus gives the weight of its influence in more ways than one in favor of union and good fellow-feeling. How did this happen? Most naturally. In the beginning the meeting-house was, as we know, the place for meeting, no matter for what good and orderly purpose we desired to come together, and our social nature was well developed. It was not for worship alone, by any means, and it belonged to the town as a whole, as any church building of an established order appropriately must. I think that we went rather to hear sermons and to sing hymns or psalms than to worship, if the truth were known, and doubtless many of us went from the remote corners of Cranford to

meet our kind, and therefore the building was most properly called a *meeting*-house. One of my fellow townsmen plainly said, the other day, that our revered ancestors were no more pious than we are, but that in the days of ox-teams and poor roads they enjoyed their Sabbaths by going to meeting, in spite of the long sermons and the tedious rides in lumbering carts or on the back of a horse.

We went to this house, certainly to sing hymns for one thing, and the singing was solemn, no doubt. There was no choir to perform the service for us, at least until the year 1767, when the town voted that "those persons who had taken pains to instruct themselves in singing" might have special seats assigned

to them. There is good authority for saying, in fact some of the grandfathers remember, that when a psalm was selected from Sternhold and Hopkins, or a hymn from Dr. Watts, it was slowly "lined" by the minister or senior deacon, a line, or at most two lines, at a time, and sung by the congregation as thus delivered from the pulpit or the deacons' seat.

Hail, Sternhold, then; and Hopkins, hail!

"Amen!" saith Cowper, contrasting these "poets" with others of his age, who allowed "flattery, folly, lust" to "employ the pen." It is difficult to sympathize fully with this exultant praise, or with Cowper's dispraise of "Butler's wit, Pope's numbers, Prior's ease."

When the reader had given us from the book "Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound," or, "My drowsy powers, why sleep ye so?" he was expected to take a rest till the congregation had sung those lines before he read the next. By such means was a due solemnity insured in the olden times. In many a house of worship the congregation is now sophisticated and prefers the operatic performances of the modern meeting-house quartette.

The long, quaint words, the humdrum rhyme,
The verse that reads like prose,
Are relics of a sturdier time
Than modern childhood knows.

The psalm tunes of the Puritan;
The hymns that dared to go

Down shuddering through the abyss of man,
His gulfs of conscious woe;

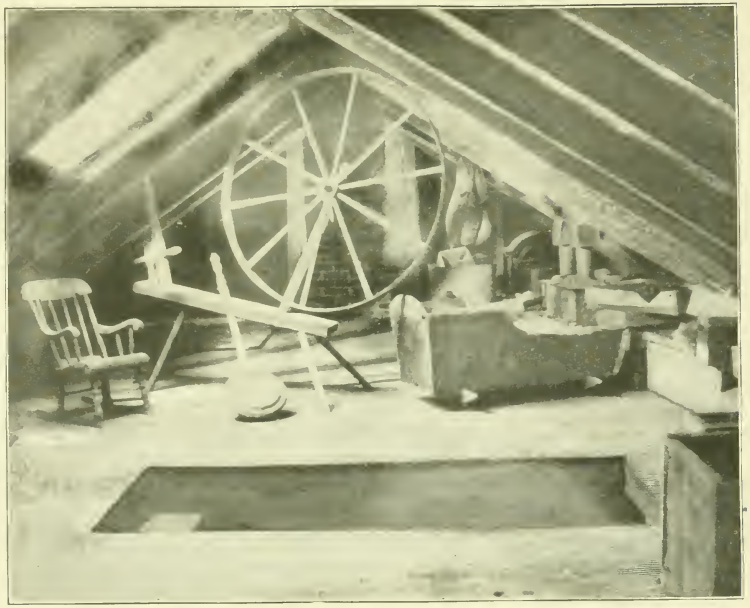
That scaled the utmost height of bliss
Where the veiled seraph sings,
And worlds unseen brought down to this
On music's mighty wings.

The rapt strain hallowed the blue arch
Above the settler's farm,
And held him in his forest march
Closer to God's right arm.

And when we sing some hard old hymn
That rings like flint on steel,
Let not a shade of mockery dim
The flame its words reveal.

Once upon a time, more than half a century ago now, there arose a desire on the part of the church people to own

their place of worship, which up to that day had been, as we know, the property of the town as a whole. Some one, too, had begun to speak with disrespect of the "old slam-bang meeting-house and pigpen pews." Perhaps some one had traveled abroad, or had been to the city. Therefore it came to pass that, after due consideration and long discussion, that portion of the building needful for religious services was formally given up by the town and granted to the church, — that is, as the legal document on record recites, "the upper part of the old meeting-house in said town, to a point nine feet and nine inches from the lower floor thereof," was so granted; thus leaving the church in the air, with, it is true, access to the earth by way of



IN A CRANFORD ATTIC

stairways in the "belfry porch," and with "eight hundred and sixty-four square feet" on the lower floor. In this manner was New England economy served, and the church was put where it ever should be, above the things of the earth, and pointing, like its spire, heavenwards. After fourscore years had passed, and after thorough discussion, a town house separate from the meeting-house was erected, and it is a creditable addition to the architecture of the hamlet. It bears aloft a good clock to give us the proper time o' day, but, alas, its bell strikes irregularly, and sometimes quite intermits its duties, in which case we call it our dumb-bell, and wish some magician might be found to loosen its tongue, as the great Graham Bell taught

the human tongue of the dumb to give utterance.

No seers were they, but simple men;
Its vast results the future hid:
The meaning of the work they did
Was strange and dark and doubtful then.

III

Sentiment

How struggles with the tempest's swells
That warning of tumultuous bells!
The fire is loose! and frantic knells
Throb faster and faster,
As tower to tower confusedly tells
News of disaster.

LOWELL.

III

Sentiment

I HOPE that I have proved that My Cranford, though peaceful, is not dead. Businesslike as its people are, and careful as they are in the management of spiritual things, they are by no means devoid of sentiment. Is sentiment nowadays left to our young girls and poets? Here on our Common, directly in front of the meeting-house, there is a unique monument to the sacred memory of the men who went from these farms to risk their lives for the protection of their firesides. What is this monument, so different from all others? It lies cov-

ered with snow to-day, but we can brush that away, and bring its face to the light. It is as modest as the men it recalls to memory. Here is a flat slab, supported on one side by a large cobble-stone, with a tablet of bronze on it bearing the names of the men who went at a minute's notice to Bunker Hill and stopped on Cambridge Common.

Is the stone unmeaning to the casual passer-by? It need not be. It carries us back to that April day, one hundred and thirty odd years gone, when a messenger entered My Cranford shouting, "The British are upon us! They are killing our men! Our wives and our homes are threatened! To arms!" It tells us of three brothers, who were at the moment prying this stone from its

THE BUNKER HILL MEMORIAL STONE

bed, who dropped their tools and, true to their engagement as Minute Men, took up their march to the field of danger. Sentiment has not died in Cranford.

To them was life a simple art
Of duties to be done,
A game where each man took his part,
A race where all must run.

The stone has been held in honor all the years, and now it repeats for new centuries the story of heroes who once trod these streets, who once tilled these fields, who once entered the doors of this meeting-house and listened to the sermons that ancient divines were wont to give them as stimulants to their godliness and their patriotism. The stone

carries us back to the days that tried men's hearts, and we see the Reverend Daniel Emerson's son Ralph "drilling the matross," as the cannon that gave him his death-wound explodes and carries grief into the hearts of Cranford. His tombstone tells us that

> We drop apace, —
> By nature some decay
> And some the gusts of fortune sweep away.

The men of that period have, it is true, been swept away, but their memory remains in My Cranford. Their meeting-house reminds me as I read its story that at an early day, when the citizens paying taxes numbered twenty-nine, its predecessor was erected, and that when the number of seventy-nine was reached, a second one was put up

to replace it. It was a simple thing in those days to build a meeting-house, for there was no elaboration, no heating arrangement even to be provided for. There were small "foot stoves," which the dames carried and replenished the coals of at the "noon houses," so called, near by. The men doubtless warmed themselves by exercise in the horse-sheds, and they cheered the inner man with cider that two of the deacons had stored in a covered cellar made for the purpose. It is reported that some of the noon houses were managed on the club principle, the members supplying in rotation the cider that was necessary to quench the inordinate thirst of the men of heroic days.

In 1690 the town of Stonington, in

the province of Connecticut, voted to "build near the Church a small house fourteen feet square with seven foot posts and fireplace for Mr. Noyes to warm himself in cold weather between meetings," according to the history of the First Congregational Church in that town. We built our noon houses for the laity. Doubtless our parsons were permitted to warm themselves in them, though the parsonage was near by; but we never gave them a noon house by themselves.

The horse-sheds in early times were narrow, for the older members of the congregation came on horseback, long lines of them. The children walked, and carried their shoes and stockings in their hands until they got to a place

near the meeting-house, when they stopped and put them on their bare feet, to remain until the service was over, a long, long time, for it is estimated that they spent hardly less than four hours each Sunday in the house of worship. The way must have been trying to both young and old, for there were no roads in Cranford until after the Revolutionary War.

I love to sit here in comfort and think of the hard times the ancient folk had in My Cranford, and to reflect that they did not call them hard. My blaze has gone, and the andirons stand before me in the magnifying dusk like sentinels of the heroic days. I must stir the coals and put on another bit of maple from the Cranford woods.

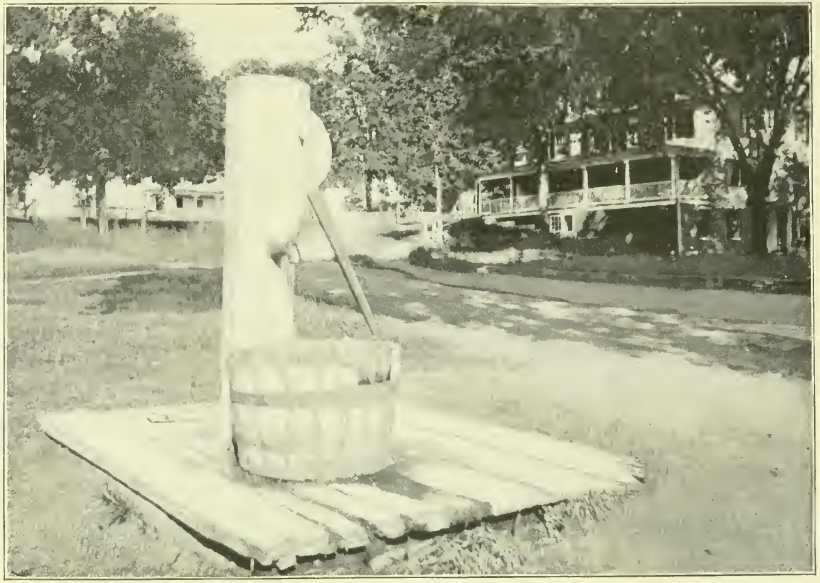
In my walks about the old thorp I meet the Antiquary of the place, who longs to stop me to tell me stories of the ancient times. An antiquary in a place like Cranford is the real thing. There are no airs about him. He lives like other men in his weather-beaten mansion, with his barn near by, and its acres of apple orchard and mowing land spreading out on every side. He goes to the meeting-house of a Sunday, and after the service he drops into the Public Library and scans some of its mustiest volumes, — books that his young neighbors never see, and that his ancient friends have long ago forgotten. From their dry chapters he squeezes juicy facts that sustain him when memories of the parson's ser-

mons have become dim. You can't touch him without getting your share of the inspiration that the volumes on the bottom shelf distill for him, as he lovingly turns their time-stained pages.

There is a fire engine on exhibition in Cranford, but in the absence of fires it is used, so far as I have observed, for the peaceful purpose of clearing stagnant wells; and very useful it is. One little city visitor, who was told that it was a fire engine, asked at once, "Where is the smoke?" She had never seen such a thing drawn by hand through the streets of her home.

I said, "in the absence of fires," but alas, while I was musing the fire burned! Perhaps some locofoco match left in the

building by a former owner was rubbed into vitality after a sixty years' sleep by an active rat, child of the rats of an earlier century. It was in the middle of a dark March night. Wanamaker had connected the ancient building with the rest of the world by means of Mr. Bell's telephone, and one could expect that an alarm would be easily and promptly given to the men who were accustomed to bring into action the smokeless fire engine that had reposed unused for so many years in the small public building opposite Wanamaker's, — but, no. Electricity is a good and quick-moving servant when all conditions are right, but it is of no more use than the unaided human voice in spreading an alarm when its wires are crossed, or



THE CRANFORD TOWN PUMP AND WANAMAKER'S

burned off, and burned off they proved to be when Wanamaker and his neighbors tried to call for help on that eventful night.

Pray, did you ever assist at a fire in the country, where the engine is worked by untrained man-power, and the only water is found, like glorious truth, at the bottom of a well or cistern? Did you ever witness the neighborly enthusiasm that caused every man to get in the way of the usefulness of every other helper; when the engine, long unused in actual emergency, might need oiling at every joint, or repairs at some essential and unexpected place?

If you have not you will be helpless, O reader, to appreciate the events of the cold night that thrilled every neighbor,

that forced the family in Wanamaker's to jump for life into the deep snow, and that left, when daylight revealed the scene to us, only an empty cellar, and a pile of sawdust that saved the ice that was to have cooled the "soft" drinkables that Wanamaker dispensed. The ancient timbers were as tinder that the flames cheerfully licked up in sardonic glee, and as the neighbors stood around that morning there was not one who did not feel in his inmost soul that his home would likewise be carried off if attacked by a locofoco and a rat. We have a pond on an elevation that Love Lane has often led us to, and now a committee is formed to discuss the subject of bringing the water down to our level as a protection from future danger,

and, incidentally, to enable us all to enjoy the luxury of a bathroom such as the parson has been furnished with by his loving parishioners, such as two other members of the flock have supplied themselves with. There are fire extinguishers in one house and another now, and it may be many years ere even they will be necessary, for the last previous fire in Cranford occurred in the preceding century. Really, we think it a waste of time to practice the use of appliances of that sort, or to keep our engine in a state of efficiency when it is called for only once or twice in a hundred years! So we set the extinguisher on a shelf behind a door, and allow the fire engine to continue to enjoy an ornamental existence.

As one walks from the centre of My Cranford towards Alston Moor, the road makes a turn around one of the most patriarchal houses in the old town. It has an entrance and many windows on each side that is presented to the passer-by. For how many generations the mansion has stood on this corner, I know not. At one time a fence kept off intruders, or seemed to be intended to serve such a purpose, but those who have followed the discussions of the freemen in town meeting assembled know that its design was rather to protect the premises from the approach of wandering domestic animals, which are no longer permitted to range at their own sweet will.

There was once a protecting gateway

giving access to the entrance, by way of a modest pergola. Long ago the fence fell away, being no more a necessity, and now the visitor may walk unopposed to the pergola and knock at the door. But knocking is not necessary, for the Kindly Corner always shows the sole inhabitant of the great house sitting under the shade of her porch, and evidently ready to welcome any one who happens to approach.

"Always"— no, "often," for Miss Harrington is of a social disposition, and visits her neighbors frequently, enlivening their gatherings with her wisdom, which flows with great freedom, and is as entertaining as it is wise. Why Miss Harrington chooses to live by herself in the great house, no one can guess.

One by one the brothers and sisters of the large family of which she was a member have died or been enticed away from My Cranford, and Miss Harrington is left alone. Doubtless she thinks it her pious duty to stand guard forever at the hearthstone of generations that have gone, and well she performs it. Her mind seems an open book, for she gives out in conversation much that few are capable of giving; but there are recesses into which no one in Cranford can penetrate, and her heart, kindly in every expression, has depths that no inquisitive neighbor nor loving friend can fathom. Miss Harrington and her big house give us a mystery that adds to the interest of village life. As we pass the great mansion we are apt to meet the genius

A COTTAGE AT THE ROADSIDE

of the place, who has some wise or witty word always ready for young or old. The blinds are closed over the long rows of windows; the doors, too, are unopened, — all except the one that Miss Harrington finds necessary for her exit and ingress; the extensive outbuildings show plainly that they are unused, and the air of mystery that surrounds everything is deep and impenetrable. The village knows that a bright intellect is there, but why its possessor puts any barrier between herself and her kind it may ask, but no reply ever comes. The poet, who has enlightened us before, suggests a reply: —

Hereby
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote
From evil speaking; rancor, never sought,

Comes to me not, malignant truth or lie;
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joy-
ous thought.

IV

Our Hermits

Come, all young people far and near,
A lamentation you shall hear
Of a young man and his True Love,
Whom he adored and prized above
All riches.

LOCAL BALLAD.

IV

Our Hermits

IT is hardly to be conceived that a reputable village could preserve an enduring respectability without being able to count a hermit within its limits. My Cranford is no exception to the general statement. To be more exact, Cranford has had two hermits. I never saw a hermit, and I fancy that the sight would not attract me. I have read of them in prose and verse, but I dare say that the accounts have been colored by the license that even prose writers indulge in occasionally. I have seen a man in a city who might well have been a

hermit, and who would have developed into one under proper treatment. He did not dwell in a dale, like Goldsmith's hermit, and he did not make

Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise,

like the hermit of that other English poet. He dwelt all alone, surely, and his abode was never entered by persons of inquisitive nature. He had books and papers, and dust gathered on them until he died.

The poet is certainly your seer, and a hundred years ago Wordsworth described the place: —

Scattered was the floor,
And, in like sort, chair, window seat, and shelf,
With books, maps, fossils, withered plants and flowers,

And tufts of mountain moss; mechanic tools
Lay intermixed with scraps of paper, — some
Scribbled with verse; a broken angling-rod
And shattered telescope, together linked
By cobwebs, stood within a dusty nook;
And instruments of music, some half-made,
Some in disgrace, hung dangling from the walls.

Why there should be hermits, I am quite unable to say. Why should any one wish to live like Parnell's hermit, for example? Listen: —

Far in a wild, unknown to public view,
From youth to age a reverend hermit grew;
The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well:
Remote from men, with God he passed his days.

Is the picture attractive — except as po-

etry? Would not a cot in the country, or even a flat in the city, be preferable to a bed of moss in a cave? Fruits are certainly good in their way, and water from a crystal well cannot be excelled — if it has been analyzed.

Reflect on the circumstances of the case a little further. No way has been found to warm a cave in a wild unknown, and there is no cellar there, nor any attic. Ventilation is possible, but it is usually imperfect, and how could a doctor be called if rheumatic pains were to be developed by the underground dampness? for even hermits must be subject to human ailments. Then a constant fruit diet might bring on indigestion, and even the apothecary, like the world, would be remote.

There are many other drawbacks to the life of a hermit. His experience does not usually turn out so happily as that of Goldsmith's "gentle hermit of the dale." His larder would, from the nature of the case, be inadequately and irregularly supplied; his kitchen would be inconvenient; his table furniture poor, if hermits have table furniture; his clothing scant and disreputable, and open to attacks from both heat and cold. His mornings, afternoons, and evenings would be lonely, though he might enjoy that as giving him opportunity for undisturbed reflection. Still, suffering must be his usual lot, and a forlorn death his inevitable end. Can you make the picture charming?

Yet there continue to be hermits,

and I have just said that My Cranford had two. There must be a strong reason for adopting the hermit's life; or, perchance, it is adopted because reason has been dethroned. Alas, that is the secret! The poor hermit has had his reason unseated. He has been the victim of a slight by man, — a slight in imagination or in truth, — or he has suffered from the loss of a woman's love, and what suffering can be more severe than that?

There was Leather French, a harmless, simple-minded, poverty-stricken man, of feeble understanding, who was not troubled by love, but fell out with work, and being destitute of family or friends, betook himself at last to the distant wastes of Maine and lived the lonely life until freed by death. His

memory has been preserved in lines that are part of a little volume of poems printed in Bangor. They begin, —

You have haunted the dreams of my sleep,
Leather French,
You have troubled me often and long;
And now to give rest to the waves of my soul,
Leather French, let me sing you a song.

But "the song" offers us no interesting facts, and may well be skipped. It inquires about the "old leather garb that you wore, Leather French," and many other things, but it gives no intimation of particular interest to the world, and so we may guess that there is nothing to be learned, except that the hero lived a long, poverty-stricken life, and died in the Poorhouse in Maine,

there being no such place in My Cranford.

The other hermit, Dr. Jones, had a more complete and more romantic record. He is reputed to have been the son of a wealthy British military officer, a native of England. There is "poetry" connected with Jones, too; Jones wrote it himself. It was in ballad form, and was pretty well known in Cranford, both because it took the fancy of boys and girls, and because Jones often sang it in his lone cabin in strenuous tones. He had a little preserve where he cultivated fruits and herbs and flowers, and lived alone in the usual fashion of hermits, but wandered from place to place on occasion, clad in a long plaid dressing-gown, and topped by a hat of gen-

erous brim, which was draped with a mourning weed. He was a man of some education, and of a ready wit. The Antiquary, who is familiar with the enduring records in the acre behind the meeting-house, has shown me one composed by this herb doctor, and placed upon a stone of some magnitude among those that blazon the virtues of former inhabitants of Cranford. Jones had met repulse by the parents of the maiden of his choice, added to opposition from his own father and mother, —

> Because she was of low degree
> And came of a poor family, —

and after the young lady had pined and given way in the unequal struggle with death, Jones

Dressed in black from top to toe.
And after that distracted run,
And so forever was undone,
And wandered up and down alone.

The record that Jones caused to be placed on his tombstone is—

MEMENTO MORI

ERECTED
IN MEMORY
OF DOCTOR
JOHN JONES

Who departed this life July 4th, 1796, in the 65 year of his age.

In youth he was a scholar bright,
In learning he took great delight,
He was a Major's only son,
It was for love he was undone.

Misery repeats itself. We recall the lines of Wordsworth: —

At morn or eve, in your retired domain,
Perchance you not unfrequently have marked
A Visitor, in quest of herbs and flowers;
Too delicate employ, as would appear,
For one, who, though of drooping mien, had yet
From Nature's kindliness received a frame
Robust as ever rural labor bred.

The Solitary answered: Such a Form
Full well I recollect. We often crossed
Each other's path; but, as the intruder seemed
Fondly to prize the silence which he kept,
And I as willingly did cherish mine,
We met and passed like shadows. I have heard
From my good Host, that being crazed in brain
By unrequited love, he scaled the rocks,
Dived into caves, and pierced the matted woods,

In hope to find some virtuous herb of power
To cure his malady.

I said that there have been two hermits in My Cranford during its history, but I might have counted Mr. Kanont as a third. He had father and mother and sister and brother, besides other branches on his genealogical tree, but one by one they dropped away until he found himself alone in his home, just a few steps from Miss Harrington's Kindly Corner. It was a pleasant home. The dwelling stood on one side of the road, with the buildings that a homestead usually includes opposite.

Charley Kanont, as he was affectionately called, lived on alone, at first from force of circumstances, and then from a lack of power to resist the desire that

came over him to be quite undisturbed. His incursions upon the diplomatic debaters who sat on Macy's hard benches, smoking their peaceful pipes and discussing ancient and modern history, became more and more infrequent; but this attracted little attention for a while. There came a day, however, when it was asked, "Where is Charley?" and one neighbor and another went to his lonely abode to try to discover the reason for his absence. No satisfaction did they ever get, and in time they ceased their inquiries. To this day the reason has been sought in vain.

Passers-by saw fences grow old, and fall down. The shingles on the roofs decayed, and it was plain that they no longer formed any obstacle to the

entrance of the rains of summer or the snow and ice of our long winter. Windows lost their panes and rattled as the autumn winds blew upon them from the north. The outbuildings that protected the sleighs and wagons and farm implements decayed. Roofs and walls fell in, and the implements themselves grew rusty and useless. Ploughshares dropped away from ploughs; felloes no longer made connection with spokes; shafts and whiffle-trees lost all logical relation to one another; cushions rotted in the seats of the wagons, and ruin spread throughout. When window-frames fell in, Charley shivered a little more, but made no effort to repair them. When the cold in the stable was too severe for the horse and the chickens,

they were brought into closer relationship with their owner, and finally found themselves housed under the roof that erstwhile sheltered the Kanont household.

Hermits have dust and webs of the busy spider around them and they care not, but history and fable tell us not of the introduction of livestock into their cells; and yet this is what happened to Charley as Time with its remorseless tooth wore down one of his surroundings after another.

While I was cheerfully rejoicing before my winter fire, while the men and women of My Cranford were happy in their winter pleasures, the crisis was approaching step by step. Finally the word came to the village authorities

that Charley needed help. The chief man of them all went to the desolate home. There, helpless and in pain, lay Charley, his horse and his fowls near his bedside, and there he breathed his last without a word to tell why he had lived in the midst of civilization, and surrounded by comfortable homes, in a condition of squalor that could hardly be equaled in the slums of our cities.

Extremes meet. On the Kindly Corner we have here the refinement of loneliness, the inexplicable and unnecessary separation of the well-to-do from relations and friends, and near by the sad decadence of the neighbor, once prosperous and happy in the midst of home joys, who lost connection voluntarily with everything that humankind

usually prizes, and died in the company of sympathy, it is true, but in the presence of official solicitude, — good in My Cranford, but often as cold as Charity is proverbially represented to be. Did anything bring to him in his last moments sweet memories of days long past, when a happy family circle dwelt in the cheerless room in which his life was ebbing away?

The poet says, —

Some there are
Who, drawing near the final home, and much
And daily longing that the same were reached,
Would rather shun than seek the fellowship
Of kindred mould.

Who can tell the thoughts sad or light-

some that come to the shipwrecked one as he is engulfed forever? Who knows how often the lonely hermit looks back with yearning to the joys that, perchance in a hasty gust of passion, he one day forswore? We may ask, but no reply can come to us from the world to which he has gone!

> Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
> And Innocence, thy sister dear?
> Mistaken long, I sought you then
> In busy companies of men.
> Your sacred plants, if here below,
> Only among these plants will grow.
> Society is all but rude
> To this delicious solitude.

V

The Hôtel Dieu

Ah, me! the Prison House of Pain! What lessons there are bought!
Lessons of a sublimer strain
Than any elsewhere taught.
Amid its loneliness and gloom, grave meanings grow more clear,
For to no Earthly dwelling-place seems God so strangely near!

FLORENCE EARLE COATES.

V

The Hôtel Dieu

HERE steps in an Autocrat. It is my Doctor! My fireside meditations must for a time be intermitted. Suddenly I am carried to a chamber of quiet far other than my desire or my imagination had ever before brought to my mind. What shall I say? The scene has changed. I meditate on another phase of the quiet life.

This is the Hôtel Dieu, — the House of God. I lie in my bed, with two ample windows on each side of it that throw the light of day upon me, by which I can read and write, for that is

all that I can do, except talk. I may not move, for movement brings more pain, and I am here to try to escape that. I am in the tower. My visitors, who bring me flowers and fruit, look out of the four windows into the treetops, and tell me that I am in a conservatory, and so I am.

I know not who may occupy the other rooms. My door opens upon a passage, and I see the white-capped ministers of mercy flitting by, but where they go or why they go I can only guess. Once I saw men carrying a limp form covered with a sheet, and I could imagine that a patient not yet free from the ether was passing from an operating-room. One day a visitor spoke of an ambulance that stopped at the door,

and another told me of a friend who had suffered from a fall and might be near me; but for all particular knowledge of who my neighbors are I might as well be in another world, so great is the reticence of those who care for me. Gossip is unknown.

I am passive. Mine it is only to be served. If pain can be luxurious, this is the luxury of pain. Others care for all my needs. My very thoughts are anticipated. Thrice each day Evangeline, who carefully watches me from eight to eight, brings me my necessary sustenance, and it is not mere "nourishment." I am one of the few patients who may eat what normal human beings crave, for my pain is not to be permitted to lessen my physical vigor.

There must be some authority that controls and directs an establishment that moves with the smoothness and regularity that is shown here. That is inevitable. There is a Triad, I soon found, that is all-powerful, and under it there are those white-capped damsels who go so noiselessly from room to room, carrying comfort and good cheer to the sufferers on the beds.

It fell to my lot to be under the special charge of that one of the Triad whom I knew as Saxon Edith with the golden hair. She it was who stood by my bedside when the doctor came. She took the doctor's directions, and was responsible for carrying them out. When the imperturbable surgeon sought to allay my suffering by giving more and

sharper darts of pain, her face was suffused with signs of sympathy that I knew were not professional, — they were human, and I cannot forget them. To her the sufferer was not a "case," but a fellow mortal. Doubtless this is true of the surgeon, too, but his hand could not tremble, and he could not permit sympathy to interfere with the steady management of the instrument he held.

I lie here day after day, almost in the same position, for, as I said, movement means increase of pain. I may read, I may write, but I cannot reach my books or my papers! The table that bears my breakfast is equal to the support of my heavy books, and it may be put at an angle convenient for reading. Evangeline — she of the raven tresses — will

bring to me by daylight any book that I wish ; and from eight at night to eight in the morning Santa Filomena — " the lady with the lamp "— will help me as long as I wish to read after she has touched the button and given me the light ; that is, as long as I am permitted to read by night. To these twain I am indebted for comfort by sunlight and by electric light. I am conscious that I am growing lazy in this luxury of pain. What can a mere man grow to when he is not permitted to do anything for himself, when he cannot lift a book from the table, take a step, or even arrange the papers that are allowed to lie promiscuously on his bed?

In order to keep my mind active in an agreeable way I have read books that

all readers on this side of the Atlantic must be interested in, — books by my own friends and acquaintances as far as possible, and about men and women whom I have known. First on my list stands that frank expression of his kindliness by Howells, about my own friends as well as his, which he calls *Literary Friends and Acquaintance*, — a book that revives memories of many that are gone, and seems almost a conspectus of contemporary American literature.

One after another I have taken up the *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, the *Poet* at the same homely board, the *Professor*, too, occupying the Autocrat's place, and *Over the Teacups*, a book of the same sort with another title. The author is said to have revisited Pittsfield

after many years, and to have gone to the shop where an ancient apothecary had been wont to put up prescriptions, — perhaps Dr. Holmes's own. The apothecary, fearing that Dr. Holmes might suppose that he was the same one whom he had known, explained that he was his son, and the genial doctor replied that he recognized the father in every "liniment" of the son. So one cannot fail to recognize the Autocrat's "liniments" in everything that he wrote, whether he called himself poet, or professor, or what not. As I re-read these volumes, the first of them now fifty years after, it seems to me the author is veritably speaking to me. How many memories of the man himself they bring into my room of pain!

Always on my bed there lie the poems of Longfellow, and one after another I read them over. *Christus* took me many days, and I read in connection with it the *Life* of the poet, by his brother, and especially his journal. *Christus* is of all Longfellow's poems the one that most completely absorbed his thoughts and stirred his heart for a large part of his life. It cannot fail, it seems to me, to move any reader who thoughtfully studies it. It is remarkable how much of this feeling of the poet is recorded in his journal, at the time that the sacred poem was in process of completion, from 1849 to 1872. It is no less evident that it is the product of intense study of the scriptural narrative, and, in fact, of the Bible as a whole.

When he began its comparison he wrote: "I long to try a loftier strain, the sublimer song whose broken melodies have for so many years breathed through my soul." And, when the work was near completion: "The subject of 'The Divine Tragedy' has taken entire possession of me, so that I can think of nothing else. All day pondering upon and arranging it."

Lowell happened not to be one of the volumes on my bed, but Lowell the man was a companion of my lonely hours, and *The Two Angels*, full of friendship and devotion as it is, was a link in the chain that bound his name to that of Longfellow, — a chain that is marked throughout the journal of the elder poet.

Another of my companions was en-

titled *Cheerful Yesterdays*, and still another *A Part of a Man's Life*; for Colonel Higginson mentions many of those whom I have known, and some of his experiences on Western prairies have also been mine. Did I not cross the State of Iowa, as he did, in 1856, before the railroads had accomplished that feat, the year that Omaha was born, when as yet it was but a map or a few stakes marking the present streets?

Last among the books that were my companions was the *Life of Channing*, by Chadwick, a book that took me quite out of range of the men whom I had personally known, though it was suffused with the atmosphere of Boston and brought back many whose influence on the town has been permanent. The

book is filled with records of theological disputation, and this may interest a class of readers; but for me the delicate health of Dr. Channing was the important fact. I have heard much about a sound mind in a sound body, the inference being that a mind can be sound only in a healthy physical system. As I have never had the advantage of a sound body, I have always been antagonistic to the apothegm. "Here is another instance to my side of the argument,"—so I meditated as I read in the Hôtel Dieu. "Jonathan Edwards is another," I added.

The reading of one day furnished the basis for conversation with the surgeon when he made his call the following morning, and especially entertaining did

we find the many professional touches in the book of the Autocrat. Unique among hospital experiences, I think, were my daily conferences with the Triad, as I have called the members of the governing board. In the evening, after my dinner, just before Evangeline, "good angel" literally and truly, was ready to do her final duties preparatory to the transfer of her responsibility to Santa Filomena, the Triad surrounded my bed to say good-night, and for a little space we discussed the parts of Holmes, or Longfellow, or Channing, or Higginson, or Howells, that had been my meditation during the day. Blessed is the patient whose condition permits him to read and write, to confer with his friends and visitors about

other things than his pains. Happy he who has a doctor able and willing to stop a while to make incursion into literature and turn his thoughts from his surroundings; thrice happy he who has a Triad interested to sympathize with such efforts!

There is a time for everything under the sun. There is a time to be committed to the Hôtel Dieu, and there is a time to be allowed to leave. There are two doors by which one may go out. The first opens upon God's Acre, where there is peace forever, and many there be who go through it. It is interesting that the French unite the name of Divinity with the house of pain and the Saxons with the inclosure of peace, where pain is no more! The other door

opens upon the life that now is, and sends the confined one out to a new experience, where he may give thanks and labor more abundantly with the blessings of health. This door opens to me and I go out.

The night is long, and pain weighs heavily,
  But God will hold his world above despair.
Look to the East, where up the lucid sky
  The morning climbs! The day shall yet
    be fair!

VI

The City by the Sea

We saw the slow tides go and come,
The curving surf-lines lightly drawn,
The gray rocks touched with tender bloom
Beneath the fresh-blown rose of dawn.

We saw in richer sunsets lost
The sombre pomp of showery noons;
And signalled spectral sails that crossed
The weird, low light of rising moons.

The rail-car brought its daily crowds,
Half curious, half indifferent,
Like passing sails or floating clouds,
We saw them as they came and went.

WHITTIER.

VI

The City by the Sea

WHITHER?

The door of the Hôtel Dieu, that opens upon the life that now is, liberates me, and the question comes to me for response, Whither shall I go? I am aware that every man is drawn as long as life endures by two human forces whithersoever he may go. They bind him to those who, cheerily or wearily, have trodden the way before him. The father bears the name of one of these lines, the other once belonged to the mother.

The line of those bearing the name

by which I am known would lead me in a certain direction, but my mother's line draws me quite as forcefully in another. Both had their beginning in Boston. There my maternal and paternal ancestors, doubtless unknown the one to the other, arrived soon after the momentous year when John Winthrop had brought from England that great seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which hangs on his Boston statue in the similitude of a huge buckwheat-cake. To neither of them did the atmosphere of the little place prove congenial. It was an eastwindy theological atmosphere. One pair thought it more promising to seek warmth in the cold climate of New Hampshire, and the family name was carried in that direc-

tion. There it remains to this day. The other pair, being of the Society of Friends, and mindful of the way in which their co-religionists had been tied to the cart's tail and stripped and beaten, betook themselves to Carteret's dominion of West Jersey, where Friends abounded.

The geographical student, as he reads the map of New Jersey to-day, asks himself how it happens that a line beginning at Little Egg Harbor on the Atlantic coast, and running in a northwesterly direction towards Trenton, separates the country as with a knife-blade. When I was a boy we were wont, in New York, to speak of "The Jerseys," and this arbitrary line on the map remains to tell us of the two ancient grants, — East and

West Jersey. It is like the buttons on the back of a man's coat — even of a Quaker's coat, I suppose — telling of days that are gone; of days when it was the fashion for gentlemen who carried swords to button the flaps of their skirts back to keep them out of the way. Thus the diagonal line across the map of New Jersey tells us of the days that once were, and it has no more present meaning than the name of the West Jersey Transportation Company has, which has no significance except historical, since New Jersey became a sovereign state, one and undivided.

So it happened that in my convalescence one line tempted me to go towards New Hampshire, where my ancestors found the theological climate

more cordial than the winter winds of nature. The other line drew me to West Jersey, where balmier breezes promised greater present encouragement to the invalid. Nature had in the beginning provided the particular place. Where the shore line faced the south, there lay a bar of sand called Absecon Island, with the Gulf Stream and its warming waters between it and the colder Atlantic. Elsewhere we make our homes comfortable, artificially, with hot water ; and, lo, here is a whole community cheered by Nature herself with an ocean heated in a mysterious way, and directed even more mysteriously for the same purpose.

Many things that we need are provided for us by Providence long before

we are born. Two centuries before my ancestors separated in Boston Absecon Island was prepared for my convalescence. Two centuries, too, after that early separation, my parents brought the divergent family lines together again, and prepared the way for my life in Boston, for my summers in New Hampshire, and for my winter on Absecon Island.

Fifty years and more ago a sagacious doctor saw that the sun-kissed shores of Absecon offered an asylum for sick ones seeking recuperation, and he sent patients there. Lo, the change that his sagacity wrought! Lo, the preparation made to receive *me!*

It is late autumn, the summer throngs have gone. Hundreds of the thousand

hotels have put up their shutters, and streetfuls of dwellings are dull and cheerless; but Absecon Island looks out upon the Gulf Stream with steady eye through the Light that the United States keeps bright to guide the sailor on his dangerous way. The waves sound continually their wonted rote, the sunshine fails not, and the winds of heaven bring health and inspiration to the visitor, just as they once did when the man, if there was a man, of the glacial age sought it when he needed to be thawed out. Since the first sick man was sent here by his doctor there have been changes. Let us call it growth, development; and now this City by the Sea is "the most conspicuous example of municipal seashore development to be found in the

world." On this sand-bank has grown up a real city. The natural occupation of the people, of course, is caring for the throng that has followed the first invalid who came here. It is not the nursing of invalids, however; for most who come are well, needing only relief from care or, just as often, a place where they may disport themselves. Forty thousand, perhaps fifty thousand, people have come here to make a business of hospitality. They have built comfortable dwellings, from which they are quite willing to withdraw on occasion if visitors long for them. They have put up big hotels that will house guests by the thousand, and small ones that will take them by the hundred; yes, even smaller establishments that limit their

hospitality by the score. They have established prices in these that are adapted to the bank account of the multi-millionaire, or to the modest purse of the thrifty widow. There is no limit to the hospitality, nor to the prices — up or down.

The resident population, as well as the visitors, need a civil government, and one is found here organized in a most satisfactory manner. There is the police force, with little to do, so orderly is the crowd; a fire department of the most excellent skill; a water board that brings its supply up from a comfortable depth of a thousand feet or so, and a sanitary scheme apparently without a flaw. Signs of intelligent foresight are plainly seen everywhere.

There are three principal arteries of travel in the City by the Sea, running in a way parallel with the shore line. First, on the shore line itself is the Board-walk, — accent distinctly on the first syllable. This is a structure as wide as a street, as smooth as the deck of a ship, and as firm as a rock. Over it roll hundreds of wheel-chairs, and it offers the visitor on foot a promenade that equals that of the greatest liner. It skirts the shore for five miles, and as if that were not enough, there stretch seaward five broad piers, that invite the stroller to go a thousand feet towards Europe without the discomfort of a fluctuating deck. As my doctor wished me to get my exercise by walking, it seemed as though this Boardwalk and

these piers were built as a part of the general scheme for my convalescence. On these piers are theatres, concert rooms, and open places from which one may cast a line into the ocean, or see fishermen draw great nets filled with shiny and wriggling and flopping creatures, good and bad. Here one may enjoy himself for the small sum of a dime as long as he wishes. The Board-walk is several feet in the air, and the surf in some places beats under it. The side toward the ocean is mainly unobstructed, but for the piers. The land side of this great promenade is bordered with hotels, and with shops where many things desired by tourists, and more things that it may be supposed tourists do not desire, are offered for sale at

auction or otherwise. There are endless devices for the amusement of children, and of those parents who find it necessary to accompany them as guides. There are Japanese innumerable, and Mohammedans with little round caps that have lost their brims, if they ever possessed them, who wearily bear huge packs of embroidery on their backs covered with sheets, that remind the beholder of the bundles that washerwomen carry on occasion. Doubtless washing, too, would be beneficial for these packs and their bearers, but the buyers ask no questions. The bearers with their embroidered caps are *so* picturesque!

'T is pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat
To peep at such a world; to see the stir

Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear.

There are hotels of the larger size and of the higher grade for miles along this side of the Boardwalk as elsewhere. They are huge, and they have a character all their own on the outside, while within they boast a mixture of barbaric magnificence and eminent good taste, but always gorgeousness. Their tables are loaded with costly and rare glass, silver, and china, and their larders are supplied with all the delicacies that are adapted to tempt the palate of the epicure or the invalid.

Avenues run from the Boardwalk to-

ward the other two arteries. They are lined with smaller hotels and residences, most of the residences being offered for rent during the season, in whole or in part, the owners the meantime retiring into the less desirable apartments or going to some boarding-house in the town or elsewhere; for the inhabitants, it must always be remembered, are here only to take care of the visitors and to make their lives enjoyable. Where can such a condition of affairs be found elsewhere? Truly the City by the Sea was established for my convalescence, though I am but one of the great throng that is attracted by its sunshine and ozone.

The two other principal arteries of travel are for wheel vehicles, which the Boardwalk is not, and they run

from one end of the island to the other. Their names are taken from the oceans that limit the bounds of our country. Atlantic Avenue is the business street. On it are found the railway station, newspaper offices, banks and shops, with occasional apartment houses and hotels. Pacific Avenue, nearer the Boardwalk and the shore, is quieter; has some private dwellings, more small boarding-houses and apartment houses and churches. The economy of space in the shops on both of these avenues is truly astonishing. The shops are often lilliputian in their dimensions, though there are a few establishments that would do credit to a metropolis. The architecture of the buildings is peculiar. Two feet under the surface

of the sand water is found. Therefore there are no cellars below the street level, and the houses seem perched in the air, with long stairways leading up to piazzas skillfully arranged to command every possible view of the beach and the ocean. Inside, there is great economy of space, and passages and stairways are as narrow as possible. I have often thought of a canny New England lady who was examining plans for a new residence and specially inquired if a coffin might be carried down the stairs. Tried by that test, I have wondered if houses here would prove acceptable? In many of them the ascent is very abrupt, making them seem like ladders; they are often very narrow and crowded, and the treads withal

are so limited that a man cannot place his whole foot on them, except uncomfortably sidewise.

The beach is perfect, gently shelving out seaward. Bathing is one of the great charms of the place in summer, and, indeed, I have seen brave and venturesome spirits swimming in the surf every month from autumn to spring. So the unique place attempts boldly to sustain its reputation as a winter resort, — the Florida of the North; but it must be confessed that, though this reputation is well founded, it has hardly as yet been widely recognized. However, it has been *my* winter resort for convalescence and I must speak well of it, for it has done well by me.

Is not this, indeed, a place for recu-

peration? The very town itself goes annually through a sleep and a convalescence. The houses that are so full of life during the "season" shut their doors and windows, and seem to enter upon a period of hibernation. It is true that as the years go on one finds an increasing number of hotels and boarding-houses bearing labels telling passers-by in economical locution that they are "open all year" (why not "all year" as well as all day?), and many of the great hotels pretend not to close, but they are found at considerable periods to be only partially inhabited. There are acres of rooms that stand chill and cheerless until the Lenten season approaches. Then one notices signs reading, "Will open February 1st," "February 15th," and so on.

One more emphatic sign read, "Will open February 15, by George," at least it seemed emphatic to those who were unaware that "George" is a local florist.

As spring approaches one sees a carpenter at work here, another there, in increasing numbers, and painters following them, with layers of brick, and plasterers patching this and that. Week follows week while this process goes on, until Lent has come and gone, April has dropped its "showers swete," and May has developed the flowers that ought to spring up in succession. Then the convalescence begins to be marked. It goes on until warmer weather brings from the seething cities throngs of men, women, and children to enjoy its reviving air, to bask in the sunshine of the

long-stretching piers, and to give thanks to the doctor who first told the world that Absecon Island held its face to the Gulf Stream and offered a place for convalescence.

Even the weather favors us here, we notice. When Washington orders the Weather Bureau man to run up on his warning flagstaff the black-hearted flag, premonition of "a storm of marked violence," or two such for a hurricane, we go bravely forth on the Boardwalk with confidence that the storm will swerve from its predicted course, and that the hurricane will spend its wrath in less favored regions before it reaches this coast. If Ocean sends us from the vast unknown of its depths bleak salt-water fogs, we open our mouths, as our doctor

directs, drink in the dry mist, and say, "Aha, we are well!"

Thus following my Boston Quaker ancestors, I came to the City by the Sea; but I did not follow the throng. I came when the winds of New Hampshire threatened the invalid. I walked the street and the strand when boarding-house and hotel were closed, and I found health in the air that blew mild from the ocean. I studied the place and the people when the crowd was not here to interfere, and many things quite unknown to the usual visitor became familiar to me. Month passed, and month, but I did not pass until the sun had warmed the hills and valleys of New Hampshire, and had overheated the sands of the City by the Sea. Then I opened

the door that led me away, and my time of convalescence was over.

The sea is couched, the sea-fowl gone to rest,
And the wild storm hath somewhere found a nest;
Air slumbers — wave with wave no longer strives,
Only a heaving of the deep survives,
A tell-tale motion! soon it will be laid,
And by the tide alone the water swayed.

VII

The Cranford Carrier

How many times have you sat at gaze
Till the mouldering fire forgot to blaze,
Shaping among the whimsical coals
Fancies and figures and shining goals!
What matters the ashes that cover those?
While hickory lasts you can toast your toes.

LOWELL.

VII

The Cranford Carrier

WE were in the Cemetery when I was interrupted by my Doctor. Let us not stay there, even to read the mortuary poems that give the Antiquary so much pleasure. This evening I see a group forming at Macy's opposite. The mail is coming in.

Because our forefathers kept the railway out of town, we have to send for our letters to the nearest station that the disappointed corporation was willing to allow. It is five long miles away, and though called Cranford, is in other town limits. This makes our

isolation the more complete, and in this particular the more tantalizing. We would have quiet and remoteness, to be sure, but we would have it with the news of the noisy world and letters from our friends more readily accessible, so contradictory is humankind! Our circumstances are not unlike those of our ancestors in England a century and more ago as described by Cowper in *The Task*. Our letter-carrier comes riding on rubber-tired wheels, however, instead of on a saddle, and he does not announce his coming with his cheerful horn. Let us stop a moment and listen to the poet, —

Hark! 't is the twanging horn! o'er yonder
bridge
That with its wearisome but needful length

THE POST OFFICE IN MACY'S

Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and
frozen locks;
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-packed load be-
hind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
And, having dropt the expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold, and yet cheerful; messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;
To him indifferent whether grief or joy.

You see, we still read Cowper in My Cranford, as we should, and we prefer above all modern versions those three handy little volumes printed in "Amherst, N. H.," in 1808, and sold

by "Manning and Loring, No. 2, and by Lincoln and Edmands, No. 53, Cornhill, Boston." They are bound in leather, the pages are yellow and stained by time, the spelling of some of the words is eccentric and after a fashion that may have been peculiar to the little town, for the orthographic light of Noah Webster had not yet appeared, still less that of Joseph Worcester. Happy days! when we spelled words as we liked, and no one cared to interfere!

Now our carrier has completed his drive from the lonesome and forlorn railway station, the four pouches of letters, circulars, and daily journals have been thrown on the counter, and the postmaster and his wife have disappeared behind the screen that is per-

forated by glass-closed windows marked "Postal Orders" and "Letters." The group increases as moments fly by. There is the man who comes every day to get a letter that never arrives. He strokes his long white Dundreary whiskers as I speak, and soon I shall see him walk up to the delivery window and hear that there is nothing for him, or have a newspaper properly folded handed out, only to find that it is for some one else, and that he cannot "forward" second-class matter without paying more postage. Alas, he has left his purse at home! Here are the little girls and boys, ranging in years from seven to twelve, who come regularly to glean what they can, and to take it, perchance to the handful

of summer visitors, or to the families of the workers in the barrel shops who are too much worn by their toil to come themselves. The number of small children who throng the post office twice a day in My Cranford is marvelous. Where *do* so many come from? Unless all signs fail, Cranford will be a populous town when the present generation has passed away.

The process of "back-stamping" letters in Cranford is a slow one, and why it is done I fail to understand, for no one can read the dates it is intended that the process shall leave on the reverse of our friends' missives. Not only does this detain us as we watch the two officials behind the screen, but the packages must be weighed or counted

to-day, by order of some one at Washington. At last the work is done. Miss Wanamaker draws a pile of letters and papers and post-cards for her father and drops out of line, so that little boys and girls may get their deserts. My turn comes, and I find my papers from the distant metropolis and the letters that are to bring me good news or bad.

Just at the moment there rushes into the little office a man stimulated with alcohol, a man from some other latitude, for My Cranford long ago voted that the customs of the good fathers who used rum and made flip and brewed beer should not be publicly followed, and there is no open opportunity to get excited in this way. The stranger has lost a letter which should have been

forwarded to him at another office; at least that is what in his frenzy he avers, and he threatens dire vengeance upon the head of the meek official protected behind his glazed screen of numbered boxes more or less filled with papers and letters. The throng stands aside as he rails; the assistant tries to ward off the threats from his superior; the loungers care not, except to see and hear all that they can that is involved in the untoward interruption of the calm current of Cranford happenings. The heat of the stranger burns itself out, he retreats to the outer air, still threatening to "report" the postmaster at Washington, and the official assures him that nothing he could do would please him more. The excitement is over, and we

betake ourselves to our coign of vantage or shielded nook to see what the great world has been about during the past twenty-four hours.

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

Just opposite the Bunker Hill Monument is the Town House that we built after the custom of holding our public gatherings in the meeting-house had been given up. It is a becoming ornament of our central square, albeit of a too modern style of architecture to suit my taste or that of those of my generation. It does well for all town meet-

ings; and it also helps in the social life of the young folks. Many are the dances that are enjoyed in its ample halls, and the theatricals! It is there that once in two years we have a great dinner on the occasion of our Town Fair; and there, on the alternate year, we have another dinner when Old Home Week is celebrated. On each of these occasions we have something that seems to us better than such repasts average, and there are speeches that stir our local pride and deepen the love for Cranford that some think is strong enough already.

When Old Home Week comes we straighten the lines of turf that border our paths on the highways that our visitors are to travel; we trim our hedges and mow our lawns; in short, we put

our Cranford into "company" order, and hope that all our visitors — our cousins and our uncles and aunts — may think that so we appear all the other months of the two years between their visits!

The Town House is thus a notable help in our social life. It is remarkable how many are the occasions for its use. What we should do without it — we especially who are under seventy — I am sure I cannot imagine. We have no late hours there, as our city friends would understand it, and we all get to our homes in season to enjoy a long rest before it is time to light the kitchen fire or to milk the waiting cows.

Hail, rural life!
Address himself who will to the pursuit

Of honors, or emoluments, or fame —
I shall not add myself to such a chase. . . .
God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill. . . .
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wished.

VIII

The Public Library

Trim the gay taper in his rustic dome,
And light the wintry paradise of home;
And let the half-uncurtained window hail
Some way-worn man benighted in the vale!
Now, while the moaning night-wind rages high,
As sweep the shot-stars down the troubled sky,
While fiery hosts in heaven's wide circle play,
And bathe in lurid light the milky-way,
Safe from the storm, the meteor, and the shower,
Some pleasing page shall charm the solemn hour —
With pathos shall command, with wit beguile,
A generous tear of anguish, or a smile.

CAMPBELL.

VIII

The Public Library

AS I pass along early this summer evening I notice that the windows of the Public Library are aglow, and I drop in to inquire of the fair one who presides over it on week-days about the time-stained volumes on the lower shelves that tell me of the days when Cranford was a-growing, and about the habits of the fathers and mothers of a hundred or two years ago. The Antiquary is there before me, and he hands me a volume of sermons delivered on occasions of interest, as centenaries or semi-centenaries, and he tells me of the riches

of local historical information that may be dug from them; for your ministers are the conservators of past doings, interesting and uninteresting, though so far as I have been able to decide, each man must say for himself whether any given record is one or the other. These sermons were preached in the meeting-house by the Rev. Freegrace Raynolds and the Rev. William Hubby, and one was published by "S. Eliot, in Cornhill," Boston, in 1743.

Here I find the Centennial Address, delivered to stimulate the patriotism of the sons and to keep fresh the memories of the fathers. It opens with the safe statement that "a wilderness of unmeasured extent is a sublime object"; and continues with the assertion that "this

world affords but one other of equal sublimity, an ocean untraversed"; and then continues to speak of the feelings of the inhabitants of the Eastern Hemisphere in the fifteenth century, of the enterprise of Columbus, "at that time without a parallel in the history of the world," of the deeds of the Pilgrim Fathers, which eclipsed it, of their "one crazy ship to waft them over the yet unfrequented ocean of the West, and a treacherous captain, who, for a bribe, landed them upon the inhospitable shore of Plymouth, late in the season, instead of bringing them, agreeably to his contract, to the more genial climate and productive soil of New York."

The sermon meanders through the story of the charter of the Massachu-

setts Bay, the founding of the colony of New Hampshire, and the terrible Indian and French wars, of which I was informed pretty thoroughly in the historical text-books current when I went to school in the old Bay State. It tells us the story of the first inhabitant of Cranford, one Peter Powers, who was united in wedlock with the damsel of his choice in the year 1728, and moved from Massachusetts to Cranford with her and her two infants when she was but twenty-one years of age and he only a year older.

The minister's retrospective eye saw them "perched upon these snows untracked, except by the footsteps of savage men or beasts of prey," "secluded from the civilized world, in the bosom

of a dense forest, and their nearest neighbor could not be visited in a less traveling distance than ten miles." Magnifying the small river near by, the story tells us of the "dark tide" that separates them from their neighbor, making it impossible to cross except at two periods of the year, namely, when it was "bound in fetters of ice or in times of extreme drought," though they might get over "by availing themselves of the power and skill of an old and well-trained beast of the Narragansett blood, that at all times disdained its proud waters, and whose brawny limbs would cause it to boil like a seething pot or cauldron."

The picture makes me shudder, even when I warm myself before my blazing fire, for it presents to my understand-

ing a vivid display of the conditions of an age when heroes were made by pure force of untoward circumstances. I enjoy seeing the process, and I seem to like to be made to shudder. So I let my eyes run over the page and stir myself by the description of the wild and grand in the deep forest, the solitude of which is described as being impressive ; "but when occasionally broken by the scream of an eagle, the howl of a beast, or the yell of a savage, it becomes awful." "Think, too," continues the preacher, "that this youthful pair were familiar with all the ferocious cruelties of an Indian war. Their ears had heard the story from those in the habiliments of mourning, and their eyes had seen the blood-stained hearth and threshold

HARVESTING CORN BY GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN OF THE FIRST SETTLERS

of the once peaceful and happy but now deserted dwelling."

The preacher, as the Antiquary unfolded his words, continued to draw the weird and ghastly picture of the life of the first married couple in the limits of Cranford. "Happy are their sons," he concluded, "who have entered into their labors, and happy are their daughters who dwell securely." As I followed the by-ways in my walks during the summer, I could not help recalling the dread story of the life of the first married couple who walked as I did there, but not over roads smoothed after the fashion of the latest builders of roads. It was through thickets and marshes, threading devious and dangerous ways, marked only by blazed trees and upturned stones.

In winter, when I turn my face from my cheerful hearth, I almost fear that some sturdy savage may dart from behind the arras, or enter my unguarded door. So the old and the new meet in my mind, and I love to have it so.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

IX

My Mansion

"I claim you, old friend," yawned the arm-chair,
"This corner, you know, is your seat;"
"Rest your slippers on me," beamed the fender,
"I brighten at touch of your feet."

LOWELL.

A blessed lot hath he, who having passed
His youth and early manhood in the stir
And turmoil of the world, retreats at length
To the same dwelling where his father dwelt;
And haply views his tottering little ones
Embrace those ancient knees and climb that lap,
On which first kneeling his own infancy
Lisped its brief prayer.

COLERIDGE.

IX

My Mansion

I AM setting down my musings about My Cranford without regard to sequence of any kind. Summer and winter pass as I write. The fire has burned on my city hearth, and the sun has warmed me as I strolled by the sea or walked by the mountain brooks. During the season of sunshine I have lived in my ancient mansion at Cranford. As autumn came on with its wondrous leaves of a thousand brilliant tints, I bade farewell to the mansion, to the woods, to the leafy walks in the meadows and by the stream-side. I have cried, with Adelaide Procter, —

Moan, O ye Autumn Winds!
  Summer has fled,
The flowers have closed their tender leaves
    and die;
The lily's gracious head
  All low must lie,
Because the gentle Summer now is dead.

May I call nothing mine of which I do not hold title-deeds duly recorded at the registry office of the county? May I not speak of "my" train, "my" mother-in-law, or boast of "my" town, take my ease in "mine" inn, even if possession legal is wanting? May I not remove my castle from Spain to Cranford? May I not speak of "my" mansion, though the cold title-deed is in another name? At least, I may sing with Lucy Larcom: —

A COLONIAL MANSION

I do not own an inch of land,
But all I see is mine,—
The orchards and the mowing-fields,
The lawns and gardens fine.
The winds my tax-collectors are,
They bring me tithes divine—
Wild scents and subtle essences,
A tribute rare and free.

My Mansion House! Such houses are sown all throughout the land. It was built a hundred and more years ago. I have not only removed it from Spain to Cranford, I have removed it for my present purpose a furlong from its ancient site. A young couple established it as the home of a family, the place for children to gambol and grow up in, for grandchildren and great-grandchildren to love.

O fortunate, O happy day,
When a new household finds its place
Among the myriad homes of earth,
Like a new star just sprung to birth,
And rolled on its harmonious way
Into the boundless realms of space!

It was not to be a temporary shelter until something grander could be built, or until a remove might be made to the city. The young people loved the country. Theirs was the simple life, — the quiet life. The threescore and ten acres around them that they called their own were to be their world, — their home. They had no thought but that they should some day lay their bones under a sepulchre stone such as I can see from my window as I muse this bright summer morning, only a few

yards from their kitchen garden beneath the shade of their apple orchard. Such a home was sure to be substantial. It was also certain to be adorned with the simple frieze and cornice that we, so long afterwards, admire and try to copy.

These ancestors — they were not ancestors then, but only the links in a line the originators of which had lived in the Mother Country, as they liked to call England after they had left it for the New World — these ancestors, we can imagine, began to plan the Mansion. The country was bleak, and they first thought of protection from cold by means of fire. They designed a chimney, deep, broad, and high. They laid its foundation in a cellar far below the surface. As they put one course of

bricks upon another they left cavernous spaces, and in one of them there is now found the great oven in which whole sticks of cordwood were burned without the necessity of the use of a saw. Other mysterious caves there are that the timid present generation hardly dares to enter. At any rate, whether from fear or what not, these regions seem to be less known than the dank windings of Kentucky's Mammoth Cave! The chimney in time rose to its height. It showed, when it was complete, the comfortable open fireplaces that we moderns try in vain to emulate, we who cheer ourselves usually at a hole in the floor, or by means of coils of iron pipes in ornamental radiators. "Comfortable," did I say? Sometimes

I doubt it, as I recall chilly days when I have sat before one of these blazing fires and have been roasted on one side while I shivered on the other. Let the word stand, however! Let our ancient young folks think themselves comfortable when the winter blasts whistle through the branches of the leafless maples and pines outside, and the icy snow goes pit-a-pat against the many-paned windows. In these fire-places were the cranes, the pot-hooks and hangers, and the pots themselves, in which many a toothsome *pièce de résistance* has been seethed for a family meal, — ah! yea, for a gathering of the clergy, or for one of the frolics in which even ancestors were wont to indulge.

But I am allowing my musings to

run away with me. The chimney of the Mansion and the cellar were but the beginning. Huge beams were cut from the near-by forest, and planks were hewed for floors, and timbers for rafters, and shingles for a roof, and each finally found its resting-place in the plan, — the resting-place in which it lies now, after a hundred years and fifty have elapsed. Rooms were designed, — a parlor, a sitting-room, a dining-room, a kitchen, a larder, and, remarkable to write, a book-room. A stairway rambled about the great chimney, giving access from the front door to a second story, and the other rooms seemed to play tag around the brick-work that included the chimney and all the fireplaces. One followed another, with no unfriendly

passage-ways to separate them. All of these rooms were ample. There is not, probably there never was, a house in town more carefully finished in every respect. Mr. Longfellow, with a poet's faith, and, some will say, with a poet's ignorance of the tricks of the builders of the olden time, once wrote: —

In the elder days of Art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part;
For the Gods see everywhere.

He even drew a moral from his own statement; but he had not seen as I have the sham work of former days. This Mansion in Cranford, however, was wrought with honest care, and its present condition proves it.

The builders lived in it and died, and

generation followed generation under its roof. Twice has it been made the free gift of affection by owners who had not been blessed with children to whom it might descend. Thus, at the end of a long, long period of close friendship that had lasted a generation, the Mansion and the farm passed into the possession of Miss Arley. She came from a city to Cranford, and I suppose that the friends who bequeathed the estate to her were mindful that dwellers in cities when they undertake farming usually discover that much money is needed to make the farm go. They therefore added to their generous gift the more generous bequest of an endowment, and Miss Arley still enjoys the pleasure of cutting off the coupons from a few

thousand dollars' worth of good bonds. She is doubtless as much pleased with that use of her scissors as the capitalist is, or as she herself is with any other use to which that important implement can be put. What woman or man would not enjoy such a gift! It makes no more difference in Miss Arley's way of life than Mr. Dawes exhibits in his, whether his neighbors send him little business or much. Like him, Miss Arley keeps as busy all day long in the Mansion as he does in his shop, though I have fancied that the Woman's Club sees more of her, and that more hours are given to the selection of books and magazines for the Public Library that she loves than otherwise might have been devoted to that congenial labor.

The occupants of the Mansion before Miss Arley were Mr. Thomas Harrington and his wife, and it was they who devised the estate to its present owner. Mr. Harrington was an "educator," as such persons are now called, and I am very happy that he was, for it was his scholarly touch that filled the old house with books, — not merely paper, printed and bound, but real literature. How much room there would be, by the way, on some of our shelves, if we were to cast out everything in the guise of a book that is only paper printed on and bound! Some literature on Miss Arley's shelves is called a trifle old by young readers, but it is just what I want, and it gives me great pleasure to go from room to room, and only look over the shelves. Much

MY MANSION

more does it please me to take the books to some cosy corner and leisurely turn over pages that it often seems to me no one but myself has turned since Mr. Thomas Harrington and his wife left the quiet walks of Cranford to enjoy life in even more blissful scenes. I have no doubt that these books are all as familiar as the alphabet to Miss Arley, for she lived with the Harringtons, as we know, for the space called a generation before they died, and she skillfully directs me as I go from shelf to shelf in search of particular information.

There 's an atmosphere of learned calm about the ancient Mansion that one feels before he knows aught of its interesting history. It is like the aroma of a library, that tells even the blind man

that he is among records of thought before he comes within reach of the books themselves.

Is it wondrous strange that I love My Mansion?

This is my domain, my cell,
My hermitage, my cabin — what you will —
I love it better than a snail his house.

X

The Minister and his Parish

But what avail inadequate words to reach
The innermost of Truth? Who shall essay,
Blinded and weak, to point and lead the way,
Or solve the mystery in familiar speech?
Yet, if it be that something not thy own,
Some shadow of the Thought to which our schemes,
Creeds, cult, and ritual are at best but dreams,
Is even to thy unworthiness made known,
Thou mayst not hide what yet thou shouldst not dare
To utter lightly, lest on lips of thine
The real seem false, the beauty undivine.
So, weighing duty in the scale of prayer,
Give what seems given thee. It may prove a seed
Of goodness dropped in fallow-grounds of need.

WHITTIER.

X

The Minister and his Parish

THE young people in Cranford have a beautiful custom of entertaining the elders, who have reached the limit of threescore and ten years, in the joyous month of June each year. The meeting-house is the place chosen for the gracious gathering, but it is not in the part of the house appropriated to religious worship, pious though the entertainment is.

Preliminary to the gathering the rocking-chairs of the community are collected for the occasion, and baskets of provisions are sent in to grace long

tables conveniently arranged. When the hour arrives a goodly number of gray beards and gray heads are found sitting in these chairs, looking as though rocking were the occupation of their long lives. On a raised platform under a baldachino there are discovered the officers of the Young People's Society, while at one side there appear a piano and one who plays thereon, besides some trained to sing. There are addresses by the hosts, instrumental and vocal music, recitations and essays, all appropriate to the occasion, after which the old people form a procession, led by the parson, and all march to a room where the tables are laid, and are filled with strawberries and cheer.

So far as I know, Cranford alone has

THE CRANFORD MEETING-HOUSE AND TOWN HALL

an occasion like this, and few other places can have such an one, for few there be with no disuniting parochial fences to hold the inhabitants apart. In a town where the minister is now, as he was in the beginning, the minister, not of a small parish, but of a whole town, it is possible for all to join in an event of this character. When a town received a charter in the olden time, it was stipulated that the people "should take due care from time to time to be constantly provided with a learned, able, and orthodox minister," and therefore they were all taxed for the purpose. There were no "denominations" of varied degrees of "orthodoxy"; there was but one meeting-house then, and Cranford has but one to-day. Blessed

Cranford! We all think of course that there are points in regard to these things that we could change to advantage, but we try to effect any modifications in a lawful manner, not by schism and division, but by conference and agreement. Doubtless we are none of us precisely satisfied, but we might not be unless each man, woman, and child possessed his own particular and individual "church," and thronged by himself to his own meeting-house. The thrifty fathers made a canny scheme, and unanimously voted, long before the Revolutionary War, that "Peter Powers and Abraham Taylor should have all the taxes coming from non-resident proprietors, on condition that they bind themselves to maintain and constantly

support preaching for the term of five years, and erect a meeting-house, pay off the debts of the parish," etc., etc. Where is the town or parish that would not like to make a bargain of that sort with Peter and Abraham? But,—could they be sure that the "preaching" that Peter and Abraham approved, or were willing to sleep under, would be likewise agreeable to the others interested? The arrangement appears to have its weak side.

It is on record that the fathers in other places were addicted to making equally shrewd bargains when they came to the support of the gospel. In the town of my many ancestors in the year of grace 1650, or thereabout, a question arose regarding the salary to be given to

the Reverend Samuel Dudley, and the town voted that the Selectmen should yearly "gather up" the sum of fifty pounds, and that in case of delinquency they should be answerable to the citizens for the "default," and should make up from their own pockets whatever sum they had failed to collect. There was no "graft" for these Selectmen.

When the Episcopalian says, as he does every Sunday, that he believes in "the holy Catholic Church," he does not mean the Episcopal Church. He is broader than that — or, at least, his Prayer Book is. He knows that "catholic" means general, and that the Catholic Church must include "all the faithful." This idea was expressed plainly by the great Dr. Channing when he

said that the True Church is the body of "Christ's friends and followers who truly imbibe his spirit, no matter by what name they are called, in what house they worship, by what peculiarities of mode and opinion they are distinguished, under what sky they live, or what language they speak."

That hard-headed Scot, Christopher North, once said, "Our religious feelings, when justly accordant with the best faith, may be opposite but true — the simple, austere worship of a Presbyterian, the richer one of an Episcopalian, and the still more pompous sanctities of Popery. . . . Surely the astronomer may worship God in the stars and the manifest temple of heaven, as well as a Scotch elder in a worm-eaten pew, in

an ugly kirk of an oblong form sixty by forty feet; yet the elder is a true man and pure. There are deep foundations, and wide ones, too, on which manifold religions may be all established in truth."

It seems to me that the Church that is in My Cranford is emphatically a Catholic Church, though the members call themselves by different names. The blessing there is in having but one meeting-house in a town few can measure who have never lived in such a place. Have you ever seen, as I have, four "churches" of four different names frowning on one another from four different corners of two cross streets? Let us imagine four parsons heading our procession at our Old Folks' Party! Could

they keep us from falling into confusion? But with one only we have a leader.

We know from experience the unifying influence of one meeting-house and one parson. We have the content that the traveler feels in some English town. When we reflect, we acknowledge that in any denomination, as in any body of people united for a given purpose, it is not at all certain that every one is quite satisfied in every respect. We complain sometimes of binding and long-drawn-out religious creeds, and then we turn about and write political platforms many-fold more detailed than the longest of them. The Episcopalian often feels that one thing and another might be changed in his own creed or liturgy to advan-

tage, but he does not leave his Church on that account. The Methodist and the Baptist find in their bodies matters that they would like altered; even the Congregationalist sometimes longs for a bishop, and the Sandemanians, of whom Edward Everett Hale once wrote, doubtless have had on occasions similar reflections. What the world needs is united action in this sphere, and certainly we ought to be willing to sink our differences and work as one body. That we do in Cranford.

Our parson knows that we work together. He felt the help of a united community when the people, with joy, made his home ready for his bride; when, later, they mourned with him as that young bride was one day carried

to a city hospital, — perhaps, as they thought, never to return; when they rejoiced with him over the news that that life was to be saved; and when they welcomed him home on his return bringing her to a happy convalescence. How the parish followed him in those anxious days it is impossible for me to relate, but it was an inspiration to feel a whole town moved by a single impulse hearty and sincere!

The Church has many activities, and for one the choir furnishes interesting food for thought. Sometimes there is much more inharmony than harmony in this connection, but I do not to-night dwell upon thoughts that are not agreeable. One of the most steadfast of the members of the choir here, once upon

a time, was "Aunt Hannah," as she was affectionately called. She did not embrace matrimony until her judgment was fully matured, determined not to enter that honorable estate "unadvisedly or lightly," but "reverently, discreetly, advisedly, and soberly," according to the Prayer Book. When, after due consideration, Aunt Hannah became a bride, the other members of the choir that she had so long faithfully served, felt bound to sing a favorite anthem, and as the happy couple passed up the broad aisle to the altar, the different parts of the music were properly and carefully recited, — "I waited patiently, I waited patiently," as in the fugue pieces of a former period, and the congregation found it difficult to repress

their feelings of approval, for they felt the appropriateness of the words to the occasion.

The bard has sung, God never formed a soul
Without its own peculiar mate to meet
Its wandering half, when ripe to crown the whole
Bright plan of bliss, most heavenly, most complete!

XI

The Sabbath of the Fathers

Beauty on my hearth-stone blazing!
To-night the triple Zoroaster
Shall my prophet be and master:
To-night will I pure Magian be,
Hymns to thy sole honor raising,
While thou leapest fast and faster,
Wild with self-delighted glee,
Or sink'st low and glowest faintly
As an aureole still and saintly,
Keeping cadence to my praising
Thee! still thee! and only thee!

LOWELL.

XI

The Sabbath of the Fathers

WE shall warm ourselves to-night by our maple-wood blaze and in imagination follow the fathers of a Sunday from their homes, ill protected from the winter cold, as they march through the bright and snowy woods single file, but doubly burdened, towards the centre of thought for the day, and put their nags for a while under the slight protection of the sheds around the meeting-house. This done, they themselves enter through the "belfry porch" to the cheerless, — shall I say — cube-like room that is consecrated to the

worship of their God, who, if we may judge by the exhibitions in a world of beauty provided for His children, delights in grace and brightness and brilliant tints. Do not the stars of night speak His glory? Were not the myriads of gorgeous flowers and fruits painted by His hand? However, we may not dispraise our ancestors who, in their poverty, and in their ignorance, worshiped God in temples made perhaps as well as their circumstances knew how. We sing now of—

The golden bars that shine behind the sun,
The glorious seas that seem beneath him poured,
The splendid hues all melting into one.

We linger at the vigil
With Him who bent the knee

To watch the old-time lilies
In distant Galilee.

In many ways we show that we appreciate Coleridge's "multitude in unity," and in our song, with Chadwick, we give —

Thanks for the harvest of beauty,
For that which the hands cannot hold,
The harvest eyes only can gather,
And only our hearts can unfold.

We sing vigorously of the glories of heaven, which, as St. John saw it, "lieth four-square," like our meeting-room, and we say: —

Thy walls are made of precious stone,
Thy bulwarks diamond-square,
Thy gates are all of orient-pearl. —

Thy ageless walls are bounded
With amethyst unpriced.

We even adorn our building with memorial windows of stained glass; and then, as we look at the walls, uninviting in their simplicity, we let our love for the glories of the heaven that we have in mind assert itself, and cry: —

O mother dear, Jerusalem,
When shall I come to thee?

Certainly times have changed! Our fathers protested against what they thought was too profuse ornament in church building as well as in ritual, and we are now letting the pendulum swing a very little way back.

Their Sunday, which they called Sabbath, began on Saturday at sundown. Did not the biblical day begin with the evening? We adhere to Scripture lit-

SOME CRANFORD CHINA

erally in this case. Shall man begin his day in the morning when the Maker began his in the evening?

The scene is not unfamiliar. The father of the family had attended to his weekly ablutions, had put his skillet of water on the wood fire, and had sat down with razor and soap, to free himself from the week's accumulation of beard. The mother of the family had made her "hasty pudding," which was eaten with milk, or, that failing, with butter and molasses; the small children had been put to bed; a chapter had been read from the Bible, a fervent prayer had been offered, and in the perfect quiet that followed every one rested. There was no noise that evening, nor that night, nor the day follow-

ing. A Sabbath stillness reigned o'er all.

The actual Sabbath came in due order, and what did our forefathers do then in Cranford? They began to "keep the day," before they had their first meal of bread and milk or tea and toast, by reading the Testament or studying the catechism, but it was not long before they had to start on their devious way to the meeting-house. It was usually about nine when that exercise was begun by those who were to walk, and the others were not far behind, for there were miles to be measured and brooks or rivers to be forded. Some one was left behind, of course, to put the pudding and pork and vegetables in the pot for the supper that would be so

welcome after the long meeting, with its fast broken only by doughnuts and cheese munched between services. The services were tedious indeed, and there was one part of them known as "the long prayer," of which a retrospective poet says that it —

Was like a toilsome journey round the world,
By Cathay and the Mountains of the Moon,
To come at our own door-stone, where He stood
Waiting to speak to us, the Father, dear,
Who is not far from any one of us.

There was the tithing-man, who kept order in the meeting-house, and, if he noticed repeated absence from the services, took it upon himself to visit the delinquents at their homes, to inquire

into the state of their health. He was empowered also to see that none traveled on the holy day except to and from the meeting-house. It is related that, on one occasion somewhere, he stopped an unregenerate son of an honored father to remonstrate with him upon his offense, whereupon the son replied, "My father lies dead at Durham," or wherever, and was allowed to keep on and revisit the grave where his father had lain for a score of years. Even in the ancient times scapegrace sons were known to practice deceit on the innocent and unwary.

Those gentle days are gone,
At our unworthy doors their dust off-shaken;
No more that noiseless dawn,
For which no other dawn could be mistaken,

The reverent night withdrawn,
Looks at us with calm eyes, till we awaken.

Once upon a time a teacher came from England to give instruction in methods by which memory could be strengthened. His secret, if secret it could be called, was the connection of one thought and the next. It has come to mind as I have wondered to-night what connection there may be between the Sabbath of our ancestors and the means of approach to My Cranford at the present moment. It can only be that the difficulties in the way of getting to meeting have suggested to me the difficulty of getting to Cranford itself from anywhere.

I have made a map on which Cranford is the centre of the universe, and all

roads lead to it. It is based upon the truth that it is possible to go from Cranford to all parts of the world, and by starting from my Mansion as a centre these roads are the spokes of a great wheel the circumference of which is illimitable. It is but yesterday that visitors came to Cranford Station and could not get to me until I had sent for them, for the station is, as we know, in an adjoining township. Our most accessible railroad connection is in another state, and the name of the post office there is in no way suggestive of Cranford or even of the town in which the station is. To both of these places "stages," as they are called, ply every day except Sunday, but from only one of them can the stray traveler get away, unless he

has made special provision for the purpose.

We can communicate with the rest of the world through the post office twice every day, again excepting Sunday, and by means of a local telephone system owned by the editor of the Cranford *Times;* but all the world that telephones to us is taxed to support it, a little sum additional being paid to the canny editor for the privilege. What a convenience it must be to an editor to be such a monopolist! Hour by hour, day by day, Sundays included, week by week, he sits in his sanctum, his head embraced by the spring that ends with two additional ears that cover those which nature endowed him with. All the news of Cranford centres in him!

There is no need of sewing societies, or of women's clubs, or men's clubs, to gather information of what is going on in town! It all comes to the editor by virtue of necessity, I think. But the editor helps the telephone man by putting an item into his paper slyly asking all interested to send prompt information of local happenings to the office, in order, forsooth, that telephonic messages may be properly distributed. Then the paper gets more early information than it otherwise might, and the giver is not to be accused of exploiting himself in personal items.

What care we that there are obstacles in the way of access to Cranford? We want quiet. We all know the routes that lead hither, and we can usually let our

friends know them; and, furthermore, our fathers got on very well, and they were good and wise!

I know not that the men of old
  Were better than men now,
Of heart more kind, of hand more bold,
  Of more ingenuous brow.

XII

A Wealthy Community

A story in which native humor reigns
Is often useful, always entertains;
A graver fact enlisted on your side
May furnish illustration, well applied:
But sedentary weavers of long tales
Give me the fidgets and my patience fails.
'T is the most asinine employ on earth
To hear them tell of parentage and birth,
And echo conversations dull and dry.

COWPER, *Conversation.*

A life all turbulence and noise may seem,
To him that leads it, wise and to be praised;
But wisdom is a pearl with most success
Sought in still water and beneath still skies.

COWPER, *The Garden.*

What is it fades and flickers in the fire,
Mutters and sighs and yields reluctant breath,
As if in the red embers some desire,
Some word prophetic burned, defying death?

LUCY LARCOM.

XII

A Wealthy Community

PERHAPS the cold of this night holds my attention to the soothing and warming effects of that toddy that our fathers so much loved. It must be confessed that they loved it often too warmly, and not with the wisdom that they showed in some other matters. The "hottle" hung in the fireplace ready to warm the hissing beer destined, often at short notice, to be transformed into "flip"; and rum, sugar, and water were ever ready to make toddy for the incomer, who might or might not be overcome by the winter blasts. Rum and

molasses were kept in the cupboard for the "blackstrap" that was affected by some. There was no collection of people, no convocation of the clergy, no barn-raisings, no huskings, no benefits for a wounded or distressed neighbor, no feasts, at which toddy and perhaps wine was not thought to be well-nigh indispensable.

My Cranford to-day has none of these dangerous things. Temperance is sometimes intemperately advocated; but the result is favorable to the prosperity of our little place, — it is happy and peaceful. Its roads invite the visitor to drive or walk, and they repay him for his pains in health, and in satisfaction as he finds himself under the shadow of the many magnificent trees that skirt the by-paths, — brightened

in August by brilliant cardinal flowers, — and shield the running brooks from impertinent observation.

As he walks through the winding pathways he observes outside of the many prosperous farmsteads small buildings that serve as cooper shops, for the farmers utilize their spare time, when there are no crops to care for and no cows to milk, by constructing firkins and casks, which make an appreciable addition to their incomes. It used to be said in the "good old times" that all the Cranford folks were coopers, except the minister, and that he hooped his own cider barrels. The Capitalist, one fine summer morning, asked me to go with him behind his white steed to see some of the beauties of

lake and wood, and I willingly gave my consent; for, though I had been ordered by my medical adviser to "walk," I found that a drive was an agreeable diversion, and I saw the beauties of Rocky Pond, and the milder graces of Silver Lake, once known as "Long Pond," but renamed in view of the attractions of a new title alluring to those who were desired as seekers of its wooded shores for picnics.

If you are of those who are eligible for the entertainment of the June Old Folks' Party, you will wish to drive, and the twelve roads of My Cranford which lead directly to all portions of the known world are well adapted for that. A summer walk, however, of from three to five miles contributed to my

LONG POND, WHERE WE HAVE PICNICS

rest and strength, and I commend it to all.

The road to Silver Lake takes me by the residence of a prominent citizen who once decided to celebrate the fact that he and his spouse had been in the happy bonds of matrimony for the space of a quarter-century. This leads me to say that My Cranford differs from Heaven in one important respect. In Jerusalem the Golden they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but matrimony still is fashionable with us in Cranford. Yet, if Heaven is a continuation and consummation of earthly bliss, may there not be silver weddings there, or at least golden weddings, in a place where everything shines with the glories of precious

stones and where we know even the harps are golden?

How does this variety of earthly bliss come about? My Cranford differs not from other earthly places where young human beings are found. Eric and Rhoda go to the same school as boy and girl; they are taken Sunday by Sunday to the same meeting-house; they attend the Y. P. S. C. E. gatherings and others unchaperoned; they make their way year by year through the curriculum of the high school together, and they find themselves at last well acquainted. Then there is a change. Eric has become a man and enters upon the work of a man; Rhoda wishes to be independent of other support than that of her own head and hands. She finds

WHERE THE SILVER WEDDING WAS, NEAR WHERE THE FIRST SETTLER LIVED

clerical work in a city near by; but as he labors in his fields Eric forgets not the bright blue eyes that seem so particularly bright and so heavenly blue. He looks with interest upon "The Ranch," not far from his paternal rooftree, which is on the road to Pine Hill, and begins to wonder how Rhoda would like to be its mistress some day. He drinks of the cooling spring near the empty old house, and longs for companionship as he drinks. Even the daily paper incites him to think of Rhoda and of the red rose that she plucked in her dewy garden and gave him to grace his buttonhole when they went to walk on a certain June evening, and he is found reading, as if in a reverie, —

There 's a softly whispered story,
World, world old, yet ever new!
Oh, the fleeting
Love-light greeting
Me, from blessed eyes of blue!
Ah, my Rhoda, the old garden
Ever green in memory grows!
Many fair hands since have gathered
Roses red for gallants gay,
But the fairest, sweetest harvest
Was the one I bore away!

Does Eric read the words as printed, or does he adapt them to circumstances? No matter. We look one bright Sunday over the seats in the old meeting-house, as we listen to the minister's words about varieties of love; we know that as Eric sits beside his young wife he takes in every word, and that the road to the happy silver wedding,

yes, to the golden wedding, is already open before two hearts that beat as one.

Or is it Gabriel and Geraldine, established in their happy home nearer the meeting-house? They have been brought up far apart, but they have had the fortune to drift into the same great beneficent summer school, and, as their minds are filled with noble thoughts uttered by consecrated men, an acquaintance begins that follows them though they go to different colleges (for in these advanced days even girls go to college from My Cranford); and another sentiment, a sentiment of a warmer, holier character, overflows their souls and they cease to drift; they grow together, and year by year their natures get into closer sympathy, until the words of the minis-

ter of religion make them one in the sight of the world, as they were one already by the heavenly power of undying love. The process is not "falling in love," — they have simply grown together, and how, it is impossible for one to say.

Thus, indeed, the old, old story is repeated in My Cranford, and many are the hearthstones sacred to its memories!

In most communities an engraved card would have been sent, in such a case as the silver wedding I began to speak of, to each of nine hundred friends. Not so in My Cranford. A notice appeared in the little weekly paper known as the Cranford *Times*, to which I have already made refer-

ence, to the effect that "all inhabitants of Cranford" would be welcomed on the occasion. Cranford is thus again shown to be united and homogeneous. I was myself included in this broad invitation, but in view of my age and my somewhat recent coming to the hamlet and the inclemency of the weather, — it had been raining for days in a way to "break the record," as was said, — I gave up my place to others and hugged the big stove that was attempting to dry out the house dampened by the unprecedented humidity.

The mention of this gathering leads me to say that the inhabitants of Cranford are more nearly on a level than is usual even in ancient New England towns. It is true that there are the

Cheeryble Brothers, and there is the Capitalist, and there are a few others who may have greater worldly possessions than "the mass," but on the other hand there are no "poor." There was a Poorhouse once, but it became a burden, and was given up. We know that Leather French was obliged to go all the way to the State of Maine when he sought one to die in. There have been some two or three persons, insane or decrepit, who could not well support themselves, but they were cared for in some other way. One may be given a job at sawing wood for the high school, and another may be "boarded out," but they all seem to be well housed and happy.

A man may be said to be rich when

ON THE ROAD TO PINE HILL

he feels that he will not be frowned upon if he wear his old clothes. At least, I have heard that that is the case, and I have reached that exalted stage in human progress, though few ever attain it who live where streets are paved and sidewalks made of artificial stone,— "shamrock" they call it, and a more expressive translation could not be made. If this definition of "rich" be correct, there is no more wealthy community than Cranford; for all of us,— the male inhabitants at least,—from highest to lowest, from youngest to oldest, wear our hats and coats, not to mention other garments, until the fashions under which they were constructed have been forgotten and buried, never to be resurrected, —and we are comfortable! What mat-

ters it if my old hat has seen better days, if there be two holes in it besides the one that I put my head into, and if the band be the worse for wear? It is a faithful old friend. When I appear at Macy's, every one knows that I have a better one at home, and that it will be exhibited on Sundays and on Old Home Day.

It is not on this basis, however, that the wealth of Cranford stands. It was publicly stated more than twoscore years ago that Cranford "is one of the wealthiest towns in the country, and that everything pertaining to its farms and farmhouses bears a token of wealth and thrift." This statement is the testimony of a writer far removed from local prejudice. The Cheeryble Brothers have mills that make the great pines and oaks

into lumber, which goes to increase the wealth of Cranford and do its share in the progress of the world. On one of my walks I encountered, at a distance from the centre, a husbandman, who told me of seeing one of the brothers, the Senator, near one of his mills, and, said he, "he was helping to pile lumber, and he worth his thousands!"

The wealthiest man or woman in Cranford does not disdain to put a hand to whatever is necessary, and the Cheeryble Brothers least of all. They dominate "their thousands" of acres as well as their thousands of dollars, but they share with all their neighbors the labor that Cranford needs to have done.

The female portion of the community is not so blest as we men are, and

accordingly one does not have to wait until Sunday, nor go to the meeting-house, to see the adornments that fashion of the twentieth century has decreed to be correct for them to follow. Poor creatures! they go about the hamlet in finery that loudly proclaims their indigence and their adherence to the dictates of Paris and London, perhaps of Butterick's or other patterns, as depicted in some Bazar or Home Journal.

He meets, by heavenly chance express,
  His destined wife; some hidden hand
Unveils to him that loveliness
  Which others cannot understand.
No songs of love, no summer dreams
  Did e'er his longing fancy fire
With visions like to this; she seems
  In all things better than desire.

His merits in her presence grow,
To match the promise in her eyes,
And round her happy footsteps blow
The authentic airs of Paradise.

XIII

My Fire Goes Out

With good and gentle-humored hearts
I choose to chat where'er I come,
Whate'er the subject be that starts;
But if I get among the glum,
I hold my tongue, to tell the truth,
And keep my breath to cool my broth.

JOHN BYROM.

XIII

My Fire Goes Out

THE Cheeryble Brothers!

When Dickens wrote of them seventy years ago, he said that they were two; but we have found four of them. There is the Merchant, the Senator, the Farmer, and the Planter; and they have been driven by health and other considerations to divide their places of residence, just as their grandfather divided his seven sons when he sent them to college, some to Harvard, others to Yale, and the remainder to the home institution at Hanover. It would not do, I suppose he argued, to give the weight

of his example to over-filling the freshman class in any one of the institutions by sending the whole family to it. In time they turned out lawyers, doctors, judges, dictionary-makers, and farmers. They showed that college education, whatever its brand, was worth having.

That was a day of considerable families, and one dry-as-dust bethought himself to estimate the number of children in a portion of Cranford one day. He found that there were but three among the forty-eight families that had had no children, while the remaining forty-five owned to three hundred and eighty-four, making an average of eight and eight fifteenths to each, and raising the query to which the eight fifteenths of a boy or girl belonged. Nine had six chil-

dren each, not counting any odd fractions of children; seven had seven each; four had eight each; eight had nine each; four had ten; two, eleven; three, twelve; two, thirteen; one, fourteen; one, fifteen; and one had sixteen olive plants sitting around his family board.

Here were three hundred and eighty-four children, of whom three hundred and twenty-nine lived to adult age. The father of one of the families of twelve reached the age of ninety-two, while his wife died at eighty-eight, after near threescore and ten years of married life. Twelve of these children lived so long that their ages counted up to nine hundred and twenty-two years, averaging nearly seventy-seven years. Perhaps this record may be equaled, but I consider

it a proud tribute to the health-giving qualities of the Cranford atmosphere!

It is one of the blessings of My Cranford that everybody is busy. It seems as though the boys and girls begin to work as soon as they are born. At any rate, it is certainly not long after that important event in their history that we see them in hosts on their knees picking the strawberries that grow in the cultivated fields by the ton, and not long after that they are occupied with different work. They harness and drive the horses; they mix the feed for the multitudinous coops of chickens that are seen everywhere; they feed the cows; and they grow by degrees, or rather by age, into every industry of their fathers. It strikes the visitor with wonder as he

FEEDING THE CHICKENS AT CRANFORD

sees how freely both boys and girls drive over the twelve roads that, as I have said, connect Cranford with the rest of the world, and how secure they evidently are from harm. No less busy are the mothers and older sisters, who are mothers to be. They are blest above city boys and girls and men and women because they are inducted at a very early age into the labors that Shakespeare and other writers of long ago knew as "mysteries"[1] indeed, — the trades of one sort and another by which the social union is kept agoing in good order. A difficulty arises; for where every one is occupied, it becomes difficult to get help in any work that would take another

[1] Old French *mestier*, French *métier*, a usual occupation, a trade.

out of his or her immediate sphere of usefulness.

One of the necessary "mysteries" of every household is the washing of the dishes, that we men so little think of except when that work is poorly done. How many dishes is it necessary to use during the day in a small household? Probably the "help" that we have in our Cranford homes might tell, but usually they are reticent on that matter. One thing I know, that the ever recurring drudgery becomes a weariness to the flesh, unless the flesh be flesh only and not the casket of a mind. An epitaph that I am told exists in a cemetery far from My Cranford gives a vivid glimpse of a woman who evidently had not too much mind, but too much for that par-

ticular branch of household economy. This woman wrote it herself, so they say. Thus it reads: —

HIC JACET

Here lies a poor woman who always was tired,
She lived in a house where help was not hired,
Her last words on earth were: "Dear friends, I am going
Where washing ain't done, nor sweeping, nor sewing,
But everything there is exact to my wishes,
For where they don't eat there 's no washing of dishes.
I 'll be where loud anthems will always be ringing,
But, having no voice, I 'll be clear of the singing.
Don't mourn for me now, don't mourn for me never;
I 'm going to do nothing, forever and ever."

One of our inhabitants who ought to be remembered, if only for his name, is Robinson Crusoe, whom most people have never met outside of De Foe's masterpiece. How he escaped from those pages no one in Cranford is able

to tell me. Day by day I see him pass my Mansion to or from his work ; but what that work is, I confess I know not. Is it felling trees for the Cheeryble Brothers, or loading trains for the great railway that passes our far-away station ? Be it what it may, of this I am sure, it is work that breeds contentment and permits the building of a home, and the little cottage up the road yonder is just the one that I should like to inhabit, if unkindly rats were to try to make their meals of locofoco matches in the dry and ready-to-burn timbers of my Mansion, and I should be suddenly turned adrift in the cold night, as Wanamaker was. But, alas, where may Friday be? *He* never passes this door!

There are some questions that I long to put to Mr. Crusoe, if his memory is good after these twenty score years. I should like to ask him about the "bitter end" of the rope that he mentions in his account of his stressful experience in a certain storm. Was it the end of the rope that was fastened to the "bitts," and if it was not, what was it? Can he stop some fine day and tell me just where his remarkable island was? A world of interested youngsters awaits his word.

There are few specialists in My Cranford. The village doctor, whom I see from my Mansion window, in hazard going from patient to patient in his lately acquired automobile, is one; chug chug

he goes, and small boys stand in fearful wonder as he passes by in a fruitful haste, that Bob Sawyer would have emulated had his bank account been equal to our doctor's, or his credit sufficient to enable him to borrow money to buy such a machine.

There are two blacksmiths, who keep the wagons in repair and the horses on a proper footing; but I fancy that any man of the capable population could wield a hammer or shoe a horse in case of emergency, not so well, of course, but well enough to show his capability. There must be a carpenter, for there are houses, old ones that need repairs and new ones going up, and yet there is not a man of Cranford who could not build a palace as well as shoe a horse. Mr.

Dawes, it is true, mends the harnesses and makes them, too; but he is at a disadvantage in making, for the great establishments are able to underbid him, and must be reckoned with unless one is in a hurry too great to permit him to wait.

Women, too, are busy at their various industries that are called skilled: the dresses are made for dame and damsel under these Colonial rooftrees; and though a mere man may not penetrate too far into the details of feminine matters, it seems probable that some of the hats that flutter their plumes in the summer winds are of home manufacture. If they are not, I dare affirm solemnly that they might be, for there is no such creation too intricate for the inventive

ingenuity of the girls and women whom we see of a Sunday in the meeting-house. As for cheese, butter, and the other products of the dairy, the women can do better than those to whom we owe the specimens that one is accustomed to find on city tables.

In the colder portion of the year, there are other industries which give all the fairer part of Cranford opportunity to put money in their purses and to contribute to the adornment of home and church in the town. Have I not seen the Christmas garlands from the Cranford woods hanging in the churches of my own city?

There is no "tavern" in My Cranford, though "suitable persons" having "accommodations" were in olden times

CORN-HUSKING AT CRANFORD

licensed to enter upon the necessary occupation of innkeeper, and to sell at retail rum, brandy, wine, gin, and other spirituous liquors. For nearly a century, apparently, no such license has been issued. People who are shipwrecked nowadays on the shores of Cranford are at the mercy of the private citizens, and they find that the quality of that mercy is not strained, but droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven, as Shakespeare saith of mercy in general.

The book that fell from my hand as I gave myself up one day to thoughts of Cranford reminds me again, as I stop to replace it in its proper position, of the Cranford Public Library.

It is one that Mr. Carnegie did not build. It is not large, but it has an influence that cannot be measured. A large library in a great town has a wide influence ; but a small one in a small place — one where the readers have access to the very books themselves without the intervention of a librarian — is a broader and more efficient power for good, in elevating the literary taste, and generally in diffusing knowledge and in deepening the channels of cultivation. Here are three alcoves, and shelves are arranged on three of the walls. We go where we will and browse as we choose, with no "custodian" to give us fear that we may be taken for bibliomaniacs with no sense of right and wrong. Yet

no one finds illustrations cut out of valuable volumes, nor are books clandestinely carried from the shelves. What was it, by the way, that the Autocrat wrote about the advantage to the child of even smelling the covers of books? Cranford children walk in and out of these alcoves, and it does them good.

It has been said that the inhabitants of Cranford are "literary," whatever that may signify; and I have heard it also remarked that they use the language of their English progenitors more correctly than the inhabitants of many other favored places do. The literary taste has been emphasized by the "State's Literary Fund," and by this our library, which was founded

by special act of the state legislature, June 11, 1799. This trait has become still more marked owing to the fact that many years ago a lady of Cranford, who wished well for the rising generation, gave a considerable portion of her fortune for the purpose of establishing high-school education upon a secure foundation, and also by the public lectures of the Lyceum. The Public Library speaks for itself whenever it is open, through the surprisingly large number of those, the young and the aged, who throng its portals and take its books to their homes. I confess that I have made considerable use of the books myself at times when my private collection proved unequal to the demands upon it.

My fire has gone out! My meditations are ended! I shall now recall from day to day the agreeable memories that these hours have brought to me, and I know that My Cranford will for many years revive my spirits, and that it will remain a picture of content and joy as long as I live, however widely my feet may stray over our beautiful world.

Moderate tasks and moderate leisure,
Quiet living, strict-kept measure
Both in suffering and in pleasure, —
'T is for this my nature yearns.

Wordsworth to His Book

Is then the final page before me spread,
No further outlet left to mind or heart?
Presumptuous Book! too forward to be read,
How can I give thee license to depart?

Go forth, my little Book! pursue thy way;
Go forth, and please the gentle and the good.

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